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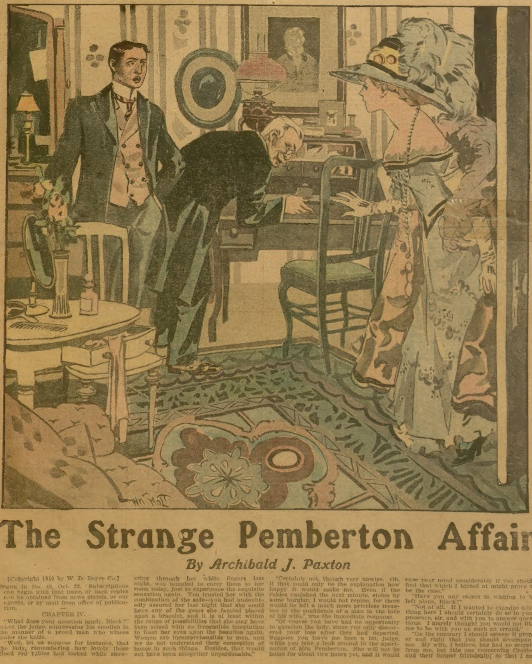

The Strange Pemberton Affair

By Archibald J. Paxton

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CHAPTER IV.

"What does your question imply, Black?" asked the judge, suppressing his emotion in the manner of a proud man who winces under the knife.

"Well, let us suppose for instance, that the lady, remembering how lovely those blood red rubies had looked while showering through her white fingers last night, was tempted to carry them to her room today, just to experience the exquisite sensation again. You trusted her with the combination of the safe—you had undoubtedly assured her last night that she could have any of the gems she fancied placed upon a bracelet, and it is at least within the range of possibilities that she may have been seized with an irresistible temptation to feast her eyes upon the beauties again. Women are incomprehensible to men, and we do not understand their conception of honor in such things. Besides, that would not have been altogether unpardonable."

"Certainly not, though very unwise. Oh, if that could only be the explanation how happy it would make me. Even if the rubies vanished the next minute, stolen by some burglar, I would not repine, for there would be left a much more priceless treasure in the confidence of a man in the love of his wife," was the immediate response.

"Of course you have had no opportunity to question the lady, since you only discovered your loss after they had departed. Suppose you leave me here a bit, judge, while you take a look around in the apartments of Mrs. Pemberton. She will not be home for about two hours yet, and it would ease your mind considerably if you should find that which I hinted at might prove to be the case."

"Have you any object in wishing to be left alone, Black?"

"Not at all. If I wanted to examine anything here I should certainly do so in your presence, sir, and with you to answer questions. I merely thought you would not like me to be with you on such an errand."

"On the contrary I should esteem it proper and right that you should accompany me. My wife, I believe, has had no secrets from me, but this one concerning Charles and their former friendship; so that I am not afraid of unearthing a mare's nest if I should search through her apartments for the missing rubies; all the while firmly believing, remember, Black, that should they be found it was her full intention to restore them to the safe; but in the excitement of our interview of this afternoon it must have slipped her mind."

He was like a gladiator standing up for a sacred cause, and Gideon's eye flashed the admiration he felt for this grand old husband, ready to sink his own feelings and suffer martyrdom if so be he could spare the weaker vessel.

"I have not the least doubt of it, sir, if we find the gems there, and I am as certain you believe that as I live. As you request it I will accompany you in the search. It is to ward off suspicion that you do this, not to fasten guilt upon any one. That is understood."

The judge led the way out into the hall and up the grand staircase.

Everywhere Black saw evidences of extreme wealth, but he was not deeply impressed, for many times he had come in contact with those constituting the upper four hundred, and the presence of millions did not awe him, who knew only too well that such things had little or no bearing upon the posession of true happiness, which he had more often found in the hovel of a shoemaker, the cottage of a blacksmith, or the dingy apartments of a factory hand.

The second floor was sumptuous enough to have been a part of a palace; but the owner of all this magnificence walked with a stoop to his shoulders that had not been there a week before, and he evidently would have exchanged most of this vast wealth for the contented mind of one in humbler walks of life.

"Here are my rooms—the suite occupied by Mrs. Pemberton opens just beyond. We can enter either way, but this is nearer. I chance to know that her maid will not be in, as she asked permission to spend the night at her sister's home. Hence, it need not be known that I have brought any one up here. Come in, Black, don't stand on ceremony," said the judge, throwing open a door and entering a room.

The detective had been in ladies' boudoirs before now, for the pursuit of his profession sometimes took him to the most unaccountable places, but he could not remember ever having seen such an exquisite suite of rooms in all his life.

Nothing that unlimited cash could purchase had been neglected in the honest endeavor of Judge Pemberton to make his young wife happy, and a princess of the royal blood could never have lived in the midst of such a charming nest as this favored daughter of Eve.

Surely, if she were not as happy as a bird it must be more than passing strange, and yet, and yet there are times when the soul of woman demands something more than mere money can supply, and love pleads in louder tones than luxury.

Had the husband of the beautiful Mrs. Pemberton been an ordinary elderly man Gideon Black might have suspected that this case was only analogous to others he had known, but glancing at this fine-looking gentleman, without a peer in all the circle he graced so far as face and figure were concerned (and heart as well, the detective had just discovered), no one could doubt that he merited the love of any woman who might call him husband, no matter if she were both young and beautiful.

"Now, I am going to search in every place she would be likely to hide anything of value. She has a desk here, and you notice that I am provided with a duplicate key, which she insisted upon my keeping, though as yet I have never once inserted it in the lock. There, it is open, and I can see no sign of the packet."

Gideon Black glanced down carelessly, yet with secret interest.

That the lady intrusted her husband with a key to her desk would seem to prove that she kept no secrets there; a few packets of letters there were, some in the handwriting of ladies, and a bunch that the judge touched tenderly, with the big, sprawling chirography of a male biped upon the envelope.

"My missives to Muriel before we were married, while she was at Palm Beach, and I in California and Hawaii. See, they are fastened with a true lovers' knot. It is evident the rubies are not here, and this is the most likely place where they could be hidden. Still, I remember that ladies are prone to thrust things of value under the mattresses of the bed, and other places where a thief thinks of looking at once; so here goes to search."

It was evident to the observing detective that the judge had been afraid lest he discover the missing packet in the desk, and that its absence from that locked repository of his wife gave him more pleasure than disappointment, for he went about looking in the most unlikely places with almost a touch of light-heartedness that was in great contrast to his recent depression.

"Plainly," thought Gideon, with a smile, "the man cares little what has become of those fine rubies if only she is proven innocent of all wrong. And I honor him for his loyalty, as well as hope that it may turn out to be so."

While the judge continued to search around in various places, even passing into the adjoining bedroom to make it complete, Black was amusing himself in glancing at the pictures on the walls, and other things that gave the apartment an artistic atmosphere, plainly emphasizing the fact that the lady must be of a temperament to appreciate such things.

"She is an artist herself, I imagine. Some of these things must be the product of her brush. There is one in a place of honor that looks like a clever thing, and by Jove! unless I'm mistaken it is a scene on the famous Riviera. Let me see, wasn't that where the judge said she met Charles, when they fell in love? Evidently milady has some cause for keeping that picture where her eyes must fall upon it every time she that she still loves the nephew while calling the uncle husband? And could Charles, realizing that fate is forcing his hand in the matter, have taken the rubies because he has determined to rob his uncle in a double sense? Are they in full flight at this very moment while this loyal gentleman is moving Heaven and earth to prove that she is faithful and true? I hope it may not be so; still, it is within the range of possibilities."

So Black was ruminating as he studied the picture on the wall.

An exclamation aroused him and looking up he saw the judge observing him with a new look of concern upon his fine face.

The detective's first thought was that the other had made some sort of unpleasant discovery, though he did not appear to be holding anything in his hands, which were pressed against the two sides of the connecting door, as though a sudden weakness had assailed him.

"Found any traces, sir?" Gideon asked.

"No, no, but when I saw what had caught your attention it seemed to me that a knife had pierced my very vitals. Do you know what that scene represents, Black?" demanded the other, now advancing.

"Unless I'm mistaken it is a view of the famous Mediterranean winter resort in the south of France near Nice."

"You are correct, sir, and it was on the Riviera, you may recollect, she told me Charles and she had met and become engaged. Perhaps on this very spot they plighted their troth, and now she keeps the picture where her eyes may continually fall upon it when she is alone with her thoughts. I never paid any particular attention to it before, Black, but now it seems to stab me to the heart. And she made it herself, from memory, too. Blind fool that I have been not to see that it was impossible for her to give me the same kind of love she might entertain for one nearer her own age. If it could only be all undone again!"

"I wouldn't think like that, sir. There are other scenes here, of various countries, all done by the same hand. It must be only accident that places this one here in the seat of honor, and it is by long odds the best work of the lot. Surely if they had intended any wrong she would never have come to you this afternoon and told you the story of the past. To me after all that is the strongest evidence of their innocence. Continue to believe as you have. Depend upon it the rubies will be found before long, and you must have nothing to reproach yourself for when that happy hour arrives."

"Black, have you any clew that gives promise of results? It means more to me than words can print to have this whole mystery solved," the millionaire demanded.

"I have several strong clews, judge, but I do not care to advance the spark as yet. Depend upon it your wife will be home in good time, and you will find that your faith in human nature has not received the shock you feared. I am placing my trust in what I have learned about both Charles and the lady in the case."

The keen-eared detective had heard something that evidently escaped Judge Pemberton, and this was the closing of the front door as though some one might have just entered—he also caught the frou-frou of silken skirts on the broad stairs, and was prepared for an unexpected denouement that promised to partake of the nature of the dramatic.

So he used care in what he said, and kept an eye on the door, though apparently having his back that way.

He felt sorry for the judge, but sometimes things are soonest cured by heroic treatment, and the quicker this matter was brought to a head the better. Besides, he felt an excusable curiosity to see this remarkably beautiful wife of the millionaire at close quarters, and under conditions of excitement.

The judge had just bent over to relock the desk again when the door flew open, there was an exclamation of astonishment and alarm, and Gideon Black calmly turned his head as if just aware of the fact that Mrs. Pemberton had returned from the opera long before the usual time!

CHAPTER V.

It was a tableau worth seeing.

Judge Pemberton, leaning over the desk, seemed frozen with dismay and confusion at having his young and handsome wife return home to find him, in company with an unknown gentleman, searching her apartments, the lady stood holding to the door with a convulsive grasp, her eyes distended with absolute fear, if Gideon Black had ever seen this emotion shown upon a human face; while the third actor, the detective himself, assumed an attitude of surprise, which it is needless to say he did not feel, since he had been aware of the impending denouement at least a minute before it came to pass.

It was Mrs. Pemberton herself who broke the awful silence that reigned.

She staggered into the room, her glances alternately sweeping the face of the detective, as though she might suspect his profession, and then turning almost piteously toward her husband.

Black was doing his best to analyze her feelings, and decide what it was that made her appear so completely prostrated.

Ordinarily, a lady returning thus unexpectedly from the opera and finding her husband locking her desk where she kept her letters and such things, might be overcome with indignation, and even anger, but if she had nothing to conceal, why fear?

"Mrs. Pemberton has a secret which she is keeping from her husband, then, even though it may not be the one we have suspected," was the thought that passed through his brain, used to grasping such questions with the acumen of a lawyer, and gradually squeezing the truth out of them.

When his wife had fallen helplessly into a chair the judge seemed to recover his senses, which had been badly shaken by the lady's sudden and unexpected appearance upon the scene at this interesting moment.

He sprang forward and knelt down beside her, his hands involuntarily going out to embrace her.

"Gordon—oh! my husband, what does this mean—of what terrible thing do you suspect me, that I find you rifling my desk in my absence?" she asked, her voice trembling like the strings of an Eolian harp.

The strong man, himself shaken by the shock, could not find voice to answer her, but turned his eyes appealingly toward Black.

Gideon knew what was expected of him.

"Madam," he said as gently as he could, "please do not give way to your very excusable emotions in this way. The whole thing is very easily explained, if you can only recover yourself and listen to me. Not for worlds would my friend Judge Pemberton give you cause for anxiety, and it was at my suggestion alone that he came up here to your apartments to look for something that was lost. He was telling me when I called upon him tonight, that the packet of rubies which he had placed in his safe was strangely missing, and after he had related how they were brought home for you to select from, even to the entire lot if you wished, I had a foolish idea that perhaps you might have taken a notion to examine the stones again during the day, and secured them from the safe, to which you had access. This would not have been strange, since they belonged to you, but it appears that after all my idea was wrong. The only unfortunate thing about it is the fact that your coming home so early and finding us here has overwhelmed the judge with confusion. I trust, madam, that you may forgive our intrusion, which I assure you was induced by no other motive than the one I have named."

The judge bent upon him a look of intense gratitude.

Mrs. Pemberton's face lost some of its look of terror; though she still continued to glance first at her husband and then at the unknown gentleman, as if dreading lest there might be some unseen danger threatening her back of what appeared upon the surface.

"I assure you, darling, that what my friend Black says is the absolute truth. I told him that you insisted upon my keeping a duplicate key to your desk, which I had never until now used, and then he suggested that it would be doing no harm if we came up here and investigated just to relieve our minds, for as it would be two hours, we thought, ere you returned from the opera, a discovery would spare me considerable anxiety," the judge went on, soothingly.

"Madam," continued Black, as she turned her glorious eyes, filled with unshed tears upon him expectantly, "not for worlds would we have ventured to do this but for the fact that your husband's anxiety was causing him to have suspicions elsewhere, and it was mostly to relieve him of this burden that I suggested what seemed an easy solution of the mystery. His one thought was of you, and how not to give you undue anxiety. Your coming has upset all those calculations, which is most unfortunate indeed. I must apologize for my share in the contretemps."

The words "suspicions elsewhere" seemed to rivet the attention of the lady, for she immediately seized upon them as pretext for asking some of the burning questions that had been stamped upon her every glance.

"You say the rubies are gone—that they have disappeared from the safe? And you thought I might have carried them to my rooms to examine at my leisure? Oh! no, no, I have not seen them once since you placed them securely away last night, Gordon. You believe me, don't you, dearest? They pleased me at the time, but I assure you I have not given them another thought. It was mostly because you seemed to take so much pleasure in making me the present that I played with them and expressed such delight. But how could they have been taken? Was the safe broken open, Gordon—has a burglar been in the house, just as happened at Radcliffe's and Farnsworth's? It is dreadful to believe," she exclaimed, and for the life of him Black could not positively say whether her words rang true or counterfeit, but the look of endearment she cast upon the doting man at her side, and the fond manner in which she caressed his white hair seemed genuine enough at any rate.

"That was the singular part of it, dear, for the safe was not broken open. You can see, then, how I naturally thought you had been curious to look upon your new possessions again, and the rest followed. Do not mind further. The rubies are of small moment to me compared with some other things still in my possession, and I shall forget about them," murmured the judge, looking into her eyes.

"But it is not right. If the rubies are gone somebody must have taken them, and you say the safe was not broken open. Who, then, could have done it? Who besides ourselves has the combination?" she exclaimed, showing traces of new excitement.

"Never mind, dearest. It does not matter; really I mean it," he went on, but having started she would not be denied.

"Gordon, you told me Charles knew, but surely he would never touch anything that belonged to you. Time and again he has declared to me that you were a dozen times too kind and indulgent with him, and that he loved you as few sons do their parent. Oh! it is impossible that Charles could have done this thing! I cannot and will not believe it!" she cried, her voice rising in her excitement.

"Where is Charles?" asked Black, to whom it had seemed singular that the lady had appeared without her escort.

"He left me at the door, to step around to the chemist's to get some powders for his headache. It was on that account I insisted on returning home long before the opera was over; he seemed to be suffering so. Charles will be here immediately to speak for himself," she said, earnestly.

"Charles is here now! What does all this mean, may I ask?" said a voice at the door, and a young man strode into the room.

Black smiled to himself as he thought how like the setting on a stage these several figures in the little drama were being thrust upon the scene—Charles had cropped up just at the very psychological moment when his appearance was most desired to complete the rounding out of the characters.

He gave one look at the judge and his wife in their very interesting attitudes of marital reconciliation, and then turned toward Black.

His glance was rather tempestuous.

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LYDIA E PINKHAM

While the solution of the puzzle might be a mystery to him, Charles seemed to guess that this stranger must have been the cause for the whole trouble.

He looked as though he would like to be given half a chance to lay violent hands upon him, and bundle him out of the house, and as this thought flashed into Black's mind he could not keep from chuckling with secret pleasure, for it gave the young man standing in his eyes.

The judge was once more speechless in the face of this new complication, and looked again toward Gideon, as though he would have him explain, but now it was the lady who eagerly took the reins in her hands.

"Oh! Charles, I am so glad you have come. Something mysterious has happened in our house. You remember that Gordon brought the rubies home with him, for he told me you had seen them last night before you went out. Well, they are gone!" she cried, wringing her hands as a person might who is quivering with emotion.

"Gone?" he echoed.

"Yes, taken from the safe since he put them away last night."

"Robbed! Do you mean to say the house has been entered while we slept, and no one the wiser until now? Incredible!" Charles exploded with skepticism marked upon his face.

"No, you do not understand. There has been no violence, some one just opened the safe, extracted the rubies, and closed it again," she went on, watching him so eagerly that Black knew she could not be acting a part now.

At first Charles looked bewildered, then suddenly he turned white, and started as if a scorpion had stung him.

"Some one took them from the safe—and only we three knew the combination! It is terrible, monstrous! Uncle, are you absolutely sure you put them away? Could it not be possible that they have been misplaced?" and he bent over the judge as his hand fell upon his shoulder with a caressing movement.

Judge Pemberton slowly shook his head.

"No, I am not mistaken, Charles, but why linger upon this distressing subject longer? The rubies matter very little to me. I can replace them without feeling it financially. It is not worth while to puzzle our poor brains over the affair," he said, trying to be brave.

"But it matters considerably to me, sir! I held the secret to the combination of that safe, and if the rubies are missing I feel that until the enigma of their strange disappearance is solved there must always rest upon my reputation a stain that cannot be washed out. They must be found! I shall never rest until the mystery is made clear," he declared, vehemently, with almost boyish vigor.

"Bravo!" the detective felt impelled to say.

This called the attention of Charles once more to the stranger, and he turned a suspicious eye toward him.

"May I inquire who you are, sir, and what interest you have in this matter?" he demanded, sternly.

"A very good friend of mine, Charles, a Mr. Black, whom I called in to advise me. We imagined that Muriel might have taken the stones to admire them, and left them carelessly about her room, and to save me needless worry he suggested that we come up here and satisfy our minds. But Charles, she says she has not seen them since last night, and, of course, that settles it. Let us go down to the library where we can confer over this matter, unless it is thought wiser to drop it at once and for all," remarked the judge, rising a bit stiffly.

But Black saw Charles was wrestling with a variety of emotions, and that he was not wholly satisfied with the explanation of the detective's presence.

CHAPTER VI.

They went downstairs.

The judge had his arm around the waist of his wife, and seemed very solicitous about her comfort, indeed, the observing Black felt that the loss the of rubies in itself was giving him mighty little concern now, since some other things that had sent a chill to his loyal heart seemed in a fair way to be dissipated.

Once in the library the judge, at the request of Charles, went over the whole story again, and this time with embellishments that gave the young man a pretty good idea as to whom the gentleman present might be.

He looked at Black with a gleam of recognition in his eye, and seemed about to speak, but the other instantly placed a finger on his lips and cast a meaning glance toward the lady, as though it was his wish to spare her the knowledge that her husband had actually called upon a detective in order to solve the mystery of the missing rubies.

When they had talked for half an hour Gideon Black had arrived at a decision in his own mind.

He laid out several lateral branches that sprang from the main trunk in about this manner:

The lady was not guilty of taking the rubies, nor did she longer care for the young man to whom she had once been engaged—her affection for the distinguished-looking judge appeared to be sincere and earnest; yet there were positive evidences in her manner to indicate to the astute detective that she did have a secret which she had greatly feared her husband had discovered when she found him prowling about with a strange man in her apartments.

Charles was honest as the day, respected his uncle's young wife, loved his benefactor, and his greatest worry seemed to be that the disappearance of the valuable rubies reflected upon his honor—he was also apparently suspicious to a small degree that Muriel might have taken the gems for some secret purpose, since he cast many troubled glances toward her when he thought no one was looking.

One thing had been brought out in the discussion that completely put an end to any suspicion the judge may have entertained regarding the lingering of Charles' former infatuation for the lady who had since become his aunt.

The young man was impelled to confess what he had before now told Mrs. Pemberton as a secret—that he was in love with a little English girl, the third daughter of Lord Carringford, who had been strenuously opposed to the match, not having any fancy for Americans.

The lovers had vowed to remain true to each other, and Charles was laying his plans to accomplish something whereby he might win renown; thus overcoming the prejudices of the high-born Briton, whose objections were not on personal grounds, but merely technical.

When the judge heard all this he laughed heartily, and clapped Charles on the back with his old-time genial manner.

"Cheer up, my boy," he cried, "we'll all go gunning for the lord of the manor. Distinction is all very well, but our good English friends understand the value of American money, and a young man with a cool million or two in his own right will doubtless appeal to Lord Carringford just as heartily as a penniless Italian count or a German baron with a bare larder in his rookery of a castle on the Rhine. You go straight to your lady-love and wait for us to appear on the scene. It will be all right, I give you my word, and if he still remains obdurate, why bless you, my boy, carry the lady away like young Lochinvar."

Charles did begin to look more cheerful, but at the same time he watched Black out of the corner of his eye as if he would give something to know just what that individual thought of the other matter concerning the rubies.

"Nothing more can be done tonight, judge, and all of you are tired. Suppose I leave you now, and come back in the morning at about nine? By that time we will feel in better shape to take up this thing and endeavor to solve the mystery," the detective suggested, for he wished himself to have a chance to ponder over several things that needed dovetailing together to make a complete whole.

Besides, he desired to observe these actors in the little drama under different conditions, when not laboring under extraordinary stress of emotion.

So Mrs. Pemberton went up to her rooms, with one last glance toward Black, which he seemed to read as something in the nature of an appeal; Charles, too, withdrew, and the judge was left with his adviser.

He looked with uneasiness toward Black.

"Have you been able to reach any conclusion yet?" he asked, eagerly.

"Only with respect to a negative result which I call elimination. That is, I am almost positive neither your wife nor Charles knowingly touched those rubies after you placed them in the safe. Who the guilty person may be remains to be proven. I have one or two theories, which I mean to work out later. In the morning I shall have a little talk with your butler, and also the other servants in the house."

"But think for a moment how impossible that one of them could know the combination of the safe?" expostulated the judge, though Black could see that he eagerly grasped at the possibility of the thief being some one not connected with his little family circle.

"So it would seem, but there is no telling. Sometimes a single word may give one a valuable clew. I have known instances where the combination of a safe happened to be left carelessly around, written on a slip of paper lest it be forgotten. Then again I remember another case where a trusted butler spied upon his master, and in this way gradually learned the magic word that gave access to the contents of the safe. You never can tell. Then I shall see you again at nine, judge. You can depend upon me, and meanwhile allow me to congratulate you on the pleasant outcome of this other matter that was giving you a heartache."

"I feel like another man, Black. Hang it, even my twinge of rheumatism seems to have taken wings and flown away. On my part I thank you heartily for not only the assistance you have given, but your words of cheer as well. I am positive that in your hands this mystery must soon be unraveled. Little I care about the rubies, now that my one priceless treasure is safe."

Was it, Black found himself asking, as he made his way along the fog-saturated street in the direction of the subway station.

That remained to be seen, for there was something very strange about the actions of Mrs. Pemberton that he believed needed investigation, if he construed that look of fear aright, and also the anxiety she seemed to feel toward the strange man who was in the room when her desk was being examined.

Love might blind the eyes of a doting husband, but this keen-eyed solver of mysteries could not be so easily deceived, and she certainly gave him the impression that she dreaded lest he had found some traces of her secret.

Gideon Black reached his house after some delay.

It was nearly midnight, and he was dog-tired, so that it can be set down as certain that he wasted no time in pondering over the subject that engaged his attention just then, but sought his couch.

Just as the clocks were chiming nine he appeared once more at the elegant home of the judge, and his ring was answered by the same imperturbable butler who had admitted him the night previous.

The judge was waiting for him in his library, and looked bright and rosy with happiness.

For himself he would have been willing to let the affair of the robbery drop, but Charles had insisted upon the proceedings being pushed, and besides, Black declared he owed it to himself to follow the thing up to its logical conclusion.

"What I am here for mostly this morning is to talk briefly with such of your servants as are in the house. How many have you, judge?" asked the detective, settling down in a chair.

"Just at present we are short. There is Obed, the butler, Jane, my wife's maid, and Maria, the cook. Digby, the coachman lives at home, and is seldom in the house, so you can count him out of your calculations. Which one shall I send in to you first, Black? While you are catechizing them I'll visit my wife in her room, or do an errand she asked me to look after."

"Request the butler to step in here, please. How long have you had him, and do you consider him absolutely reliable, judge?"

The gentleman laughed as though amused.

"Why, the sun rises and sets in me so far as Obed is concerned. I'd as soon believe I took those rubies myself as suspect that sterling servant. He has been in my employ and that of my father all his life. There is not a more faithful fellow on the face of the earth. Oh! you'll get mighty little satisfaction out of Obed."

"Well, after that I wouldn't take the trouble to talk with him, only I want to learn all he chances to know about that window being tampered with. Send him in, please."

"Oh! yes, I forgot that clew. You're right, sir. Something may come of that yet, who knows?" and with that he betook himself out of the library.

A minute later and Obed entered the room.

He was looking somewhat anxious, for all these peculiar goings on had naturally aroused his curiosity, but being trained to hide his emotion Obed had the appearance somewhat of a mummy, Black thought.

"The master says you wish to speak with me, sir. He also tells me that you are Mr. Gideon Black, the detective officer, which I had guessed before. In what way can I be of assistance to you, sir?" said the butler, stiffly.

"Kindly close the door, and then sit down here where we can talk quietly, Obed. That's it. Now, the judge gives me the highest recommendation as to your honesty and devotion to him, and remember that it is not with the slightest suspicion as to your being implicated in this mysterious affair that I am questioning you now. Rather it is in the hope that you may assist in shedding some light on a subject that puzzles me, and worries your good master. You understand that, Obed?"

"Yes, sir. I also know that the judge has met with a great loss lately—that something has disappeared from his safe. I am ready to do all I can, Mr. Black, to recover those rubies, and find the thief."

Obed looked all he said just then, and seemed such a willing witness that Gideon wished he knew more, since it would apparently be such an easy task to draw it from him.

"The judge tells me that you reported that apparently some one had tampered with one of the windows in the library. I looked at it while there, and could also see the marks of a jimmy or some sort of tool upon the sash. How did you find that window when you entered the library yesterday morning, Obed?"

"It was closed, sir."

"Was it locked?"

"No, sir. I could easily throw it up, as I did upon making the discovery."

"Are you positive that it was fastened the preceding night?"

"I am, sir."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Because I never go to bed until every one else has retired. That night they stayed up until nearly twelve, sir, and I waited to see that everything was secure before ascending to my own room."

"And that window was locked then?"

"I stand ready to swear to the fact, sir."

"By the way, Obed, did you hear any suspicious sounds during the night?"

"Nothing, sir, that seemed out of the way to me," replied the butler, with a tightening of his thin lips, as if afraid lest he might say too much.

Black noticed this with some surprise.

"You say nothing that seemed suspicious to you. Was there anything that caused you to lose sleep?" he asked, quickly.

"Well, I remember getting up along about three in the morning and intending to take my medicine, found that I had carelessly left it down in the silverroom off the butler's pantry, so I slipped on my dressing gown and went down after it."

"And you saw nor heard nothing out of the way while downstairs?"

"Nothing, sir," continued Obed, grimly, but with a little gleam in his cold, gray eye that interested the detective, and caused him to say to himself:

"Now, this shrewd fellow is really keeping something back. It may and it may not be of consequence, but if I still suspected that either Charles or the lady were guilty of purloining those plagued rubies, I would believe that he saw the act done, and in his stupid sense of honor toward his employer's family nothing could drag the secret from him. Well, later on I may have occasion to put Mr. Obed on the gridiron and grill him until he squeals. Just now there are other fish to fry that promise more immediate results."

Aloud he said:

"Well, Obed, it would appear that possibly there may have been a burglar in the house on that night. I have my suspicions as to his identity. You cannot do me any more good at present, though I may wish to talk with you again later. When you go out please send Jane to me, and do not tell her anything of the matter, save that a gentleman, who is a friend of the judge, wishes to speak with her here."

"I will, sir. If I can give you any more

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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Or, In the Lion's Lair

By Colonel Harper Hamilton

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CHAPTER XI.

HE SEEKS THE ENEMY.

The sheriff had come from a room with a lamp in his hand. As he opened the door the light fell strongly upon him for an instant; then a puff of wind extinguished it and left the place in darkness. Rackley sprang forward, plucked at the Chinaman as he essayed to cross the threshold, lifted him, wheeled and began a hurried retreat.

Hop Soy cried out once; then an iron hand closed over his throat and he was still. Rackley again reached his horse, leaped to its back, flung his prisoner down in front of him, clutched at the bridle of the second animal and started. He had been swift as a tiger that had pounced upon its prey.

"Hallo!" cried Damon. "Who are you? What does this mean?"

There was no reply. The sheriff was again alone, and all he could see was two equine shapes fast receding. Their feet pounded and they were gone.

Rackley had not progressed far when he met Jack Hardy. He addressed his ally with directness:

"I've got him! Take to this side street; we must not be seen to start toward the ranch."

They turned as indicated and galloped until clear of the town. Jack, after grumbling at the failure of his horse to live up to expectations, relapsed into brief sulkiness, and so they went almost in silence for half a mile. The Chinaman no longer had a hand at his throat, but he had received a warning, and he cried out no more.

After a while Rackley looked back, noted that no sign of pursuit appeared, and promptly took up a new burden. The limpness of his prisoner told of a spirit chastened for the moment, and he decided to let it take the place of bonds.

"Hop Soy," he said harshly, "we are going a few paces apart to talk a bit. I'll leave you here. If you try to ride away, or run away, I won't answer for your life. If you remain still you'll be in no danger."

The cook's voice rose, protesting that he would not run off. Rackley repeated his warning, pressed a revolver against the man's head briefly, and then carried out the next step in the plan. He and Jack could converse safely for the time.

"We've got a millstone around our necks!" said the road-agent curtly.

"I wish I had the heart to say, stop the Chinaman's tongue."

"In a way it must be stopped. He knows enough to ruin our game wholly. He must never tell what he knows. How can we prevent it?"

"Did Damon see him?"

"In the darkness, yes, but no light fell upon Hop Soy. There is a hope—a big one—that the sheriff did not recognize him. He saw enough to set him thinking, but thinking is not proof. The cook went to his door straight as a scared rabbit for its den. Clearly, he was Damon's spy. Now, how can we keep him from telling what he knows?"

"We might shut him up——"

"And he might be found. I've been thinking. Have we a man we can hustle away with this rascal to other scenes?"

"Capital idea! Take him to the wild mountains and keep him there."

"I can go you one better on that deal. We will send him to China!"

"Eh?"

"We don't know how long our war of wits with Damon will last. If we herd Hop Soy up in the mountains, as you suggest, he may escape, or we may have to keep him there too long to suit us. I like my way. If we have the right man, take him to San Francisco, and from there ship him back to China!"

"Well, I'll be doggoned!" exclaimed Jack.

"Any visible objection?"

"Only that it's a long ways to 'Frisco, and that the game is pretty powerful medicine. Is it worth while?"

"Unless it's done, the Chinaman will sooner or later be back to tell his little story."

"He can come back even from China, but don't think I object. I always did not like fat on the ribs of my oxen. I agree, and as for a personally conducted tour for this Oriental, our friend Nat Allen is just the lad to escort him. Nat, you'll remember, is one of the party who kidnaped you for Miss Burdilla."

"Good! Back to the ranch, and to Nat. Come!"

Hoy Soy had been trembling before the threat of the revolver, so he had been quiet. His captors came nearer, and presently the three were riding homeward.

Two hours later two riders left the Clarke premises, their faces toward the west. One was Hop Soy, quiet, humble, timid, empty-handed. The other was big Nat Allen, also quiet, but aggressive, keen-eyed and bristling with weapons. Nat was bound for San Francisco, and Hop Soy for China.

The next morning Burdilla met Rackley at the breakfast table. As help was not lacking in the house a good meal was before them. The girl had taken part in the final discussion, the previous night, but after Nat and his charge rode away she went to a couch that was not blessed by slumber. Now, she was surprised to see Rackley so fresh, composed and natural of manner. She had, like Jack, believed the idea of starting the ex-cook off for China was an exaggerated notion, but she had yielded. Later, she had been impressed with the fertility of her so-called brother's mental resources. Seeing him again, she began to realize from his easy, quiet manner that resourcefulness was not his only qualification.

He seemed to her like a rock of refuge.

When they had eaten he spoke carelessly.

"I'll watch for him from this window."

"Him—whom do you mean?"

"Damon!"

"Is he coming?"

"Yes. He will drop around before noon to use his eyes. He may do more. If he recognized his spy he will want to know where he is now. If he didn't, he will hope to catch sight of him. But, unless logic has gone wobbly, Damon will come. I'm wondering what excuse he will make."

Something else took precedence over Sheriff Damon. Ambition to learn how matters were at the Gap, and whether anybody knew what happened, the previous night—more especially if Damon had recognized either Rackley or Hop Soy—had led to the sending of Olaf Eckerson to the town on a plausible errand, though really to watch and listen.

Now, scanning the way to detect the first signs of Damon, Rackley saw, instead, his cowboy friend. Olaf came on swiftly and reached the house. The road-agent had gone outside, and, with Burdilla, met the messenger there. Rackley saw an excited face and drew conclusions.

"Say it!" he directed quietly.

"Mischief afoot at the Gap!" announced Olaf.

"What sort?"

"Nat Allen and Hop Soy have been brought in by some of Simon Snow's hunting party. Nat is wounded and unconscious, but the Chinaman is neither."

"How has this come to pass?"

"Don't fully know. Snow and his men, failing to capture Rackley Gold before night, spent the night in the hills, so as to be ready for further search today. As near as I can tell, Nat and his charge ran plumb into part of the Snow party, a fight occurred, and Nat was worsted. The chaps who brought them in are not doing much talking."

"The main question is, what talk is Hop Say making?"

"Can't say as to that. They have him behind closed doors."

"They—who?"

"Why, some of the leading men of the Gap, and Damon."

"Oh! Damon, eh? Strikes me Damon casts a large shadow. Pard, oblige me with details."

Olaf explained as well as possible. Shortly after daybreak a half-dozen of Simon Snow's searchers had come in from the hills, bringing Nat Allen and Hop Soy. When Olaf reached the Gap he found nobody who could clearly enlighten him, for those in charge were close-mouthed. It was the opinion of the ordinary citizens that a bad blunder had been made, and that stupidity had led to a senseless attack on peaceful travelers, under the mistaken idea that Rackley Gold had been located. Nat was badly, though not fatally wounded, and as it was a serious matter to shoot honest men off-hand, there was a disposition to hush the affair up.

"That's the guess at the Gap," added Olaf, "but if it's the right one, what I want to know is, why are Nat and the Chinaman kept so close, and why is all the secrecy?"

"Hop Soy has blabbed!" tersely exclaimed Rackley.

"But," protested Burdilla, "you told him not to, and—and you threatened him with terrible things if he did."

"I was a trifle picturesque in my remarks," grimly admitted the road-agent. "I set out to scare your cook clammy. It looks as if he has warmed up his blood since. Olaf, will you kindly get a horse. I'm off for Gideon Gap!"

"Oh! no, no!" cried Burdilla, aghast.

"Begging your pardon, oh! yes!"

"They will seize you, imprison you, bring ruin and death to you."

"Possibly! That is not proved, however. Hop Soy has told what he knows; that goes without saying. Damon has the news he bribed the cook to get. I'm going to turn the tide!"

"How can you turn it?"

"The situation is this: I am master of this ranch—a stop-gap master, you know—and it will look bad if I do not go to the aid of my servants. Nat is wounded; he needs me; my place is there. As for Hop Soy, he is a big liar, and I'll say so. I'll face them all, deny what the Chinamen says, and—try to make 'em believe it."

"It will be a mighty hazardous game!" exclaimed Olaf.

"A glorious gamble!" cried Rackley, his eyes sparkling. "To wit: I walk in on Damon, et al., and he says I am Rackley Gold, and that my claim of being Wayland Clarke is a monumental fraud. Right there will come in the sport of the thing—it will beat buffalo-hunting, horse-racing and the ghost-dance by a thousand miles."

"Do you think that Damon, already suspicious, will believe you when you deny what his spy says?" demanded Burdilla tremulously.

"It's my place to make Damon believe. A capital chance for a game of wits! Olaf, I don't see you getting my horse. I'll do it myself."

He hurried away, only turning his head to smile and nod when the girl called after him. Olaf, grave-faced and worried, started to follow, but his mistress caught at his arm.

"He will go to his death!" she exclaimed.

"Right! Everybody in Gideon Gap must know the facts. If he goes—why, he's Rackley Gold!"

"He shall not go!"

She hurried after Rackley. He had acted with swiftness, and as she reached the corral he led out the same horse he had ridden the previous night. He was composed and easy of manner, but, as he swung into place on the animal's back, he saw her and paused.

"You are going!" she cried. "I positively forbid it! You have played a part here for my sake, but the game is lost. Save yourself! See! yonder are the hills! Go, while you can!"

"You are kind and sacrificing," he responded, "but you fail to catch the turn of the rapids. The game is not lost until the last card is played. By going to the Gap I risk no more than if I stay here, for they will come. As for running away like a whipped dog, I simply can't do it. Begging your pardon, I won't do it!"

"Oh! you have risked too much already——"

"Allow me the pleasure of risking more." He laughed, and then suddenly grew grave. "Miss Clarke," he added reassuringly, "this game is not lost. I'm going to win it. Won't you trust my judgment?"

She did not trust it, and said so in substance. She said more, urging her point, but, pleasant and deferential of manner, he was fixed as the rocks of Tiger-foot Range. Delaying a trifle, and giving her good words freely but swiftly, he presently tightened the rein and was off for the Gap. She saw him gallop onward, and she was sick at heart.

"He has gone to his death, and for my miserable sake. Was there ever such a man? Gone to them, and alone!"

Rackley Gold was certainly alone. He had told Olaf to stay, and Jack Hardy was not then in sight. Alone, the road-agent hastened his speed, feeling the rush of the air and the rush of his own blood. He was not grim-faced, as he had been when he chased Hop Soy, the night before. Instead, he thrilled with the joy of coming combat and his spirits ran high. This risk was life, it was the flood-tide of battle. And he liked battle.

Without tiring his mount he made good time to the town. On his arrival he found groups of men and women here and there. Once he paused and asked a few questions, but heard no more than Olaf had told him. The citizens were still without direct information.

Learning that all hands were at the hotel, he rode there, left his horse outside, asked further questions from the first person he saw, and, being told that Nat Allen was still unconscious, and that Hop Soy was with Damon and other men of the town, made his decision at once.

Going to an indicated room he pushed open the door without ceremony and entered. Damon and two citizens were there, and before them sat Hop Soy.

CHAPTER XII.

HISTORY OF THE NIGHT.

Rackley took a quiet look at all hands. Chiefly he studied Sheriff Damon and Hop Soy, seeking to read the story of the situation in their expressions. Then, without delay, he came to business.

"Gentlemen," he said calmly, "I hear something has happened."

One of the citizens gained his feet hurriedly.

"Mr. Clarke," he replied awkwardly, "I beg that you will let us explain. Nat Allen was not shot wilfully. He and this Chinaman rode into a detachment of Simon Snow's hunters, and some nervous fool mistook him for Rackley Gold, fired without orders and—that's how Nat was wounded."

"Mistaken for Rackley Gold, eh?" retorted the newcomer. "They were two. I had supposed that Gold counted only one. It's mighty poor arithmetic that can't count up to two."

"And a weak head. I have said that the man who shot was nervous. Had the riders been a dozen he would probably have mistaken them for Gold. We are sorry, very sorry. Still, Nat is not dangerously hurt, and we ask you not to be too severe, although severity is natural. The thing is a great pity!"

Rackley, standing straight and firm, was composed of face and ever attentive. He had but little interest in this citizen apologist, but much in Damon and the Chinaman. Damon was unreadable, but Hop Soy started with every evidence of alarm. He held the caller in mortal fear. Rackley turned fully upon him.

"Here is another of my servants," he said quietly. "Is he hurt? How is it, cook? Are you injured?"

"No," quavered Hop Soy.

"Not hurt. I'm glad of that. Now, my man, I know that this gentleman who has just spoken has told the truth as he sees it. The only question is, did the men who ambushed you and Nat relate matters as they were to those in the town? Is the story true?"

"Yes," said the cook.

"Since it is, you do right to say so. Hop Soy is not the man to make trouble for anybody, gentlemen. He knows that a mischiefmaker always comes to a bad end. Isn't that so, Hop Soy?"

The Chinaman gazed at his questioner with squinting eyes and a tremulous mouth. A few hours before he had been threatened with direful things if he betrayed Rackley and his friends. He remembered, and terror chilled him through.

"Yes," he again answered.

"I don't want to be too harsh on the ambushers, if they made an honest mistake," pursued the road-agent. "Neither does Hop Soy; you have heard him say so. What Nat Allen will say when he gets his senses back I don't know, but I will counsel him to moderation. I'll look in on him presently. Anything else that is new?"

The question was for Damon, but he studiously refrained from looking at that man.

"Nothing more," said the citizen. "Great heavens, Mr. Clarke, is this blunder that almost cost a life not enough? No more! Wait! I remember that Sheriff Damon had a little experience last night, but you will not be interested in that."

Rackley turned to Damon, smiling broadly.

"Been trying poker?" he asked, as if amused.

"Humph!" muttered Damon. "Blind man's buff, rather. It doesn't matter."

Plainly, he did not care to go into details, but the citizen was anxious to be agreeable.

"Gideon Gap is getting eccentric," he went on. "Last night Damon was called to the door by a knock, and when he got there, there was a man and a boy. Immediately, the man seized the boy, ran to waiting horses, mounted, and then rode off, carrying the boy——"

"Or a small man!" interrupted the sheriff. "It doesn't count. Of course, Clarke, you are not interested."

"I don't see anything very thrilling in it."

"Maybe there was something of that sort. It is not necessary to discuss it. Permit me a question, Mr. Clarke. This Chinaman is a servant of yours—or so he says. Why was he riding in the hills last night?"

"Just what I'd like to know. The explanation rests with him and Nat Allen. Why did you go, Hop Soy?"

Again the Celestial found Rackley's eyes boring into his brain. He wavered, but made a fair try at composure.

"Nat, he have some errand, and he take me. He didn't say what he was to do."

"All right, Hop Soy. Nat is a trusted man; his reasons were undoubtedly sound. Now, gentlemen, I want to see Nat, after which I'll take my cook back to the ranch. Need him any more here?"

"No, thank you."

"Good! Come with me, Hop Soy!"

The Chinaman would have preferred to leap into a bottomless pit, but he rose without a word and prepared to follow. Rackley lingered for a moment, easy of manner and smiling, and said a few more amicable words; then he nodded to the cook and left the room. Once beyond the hearing of others, he turned to his companion.

"What have you told?" he asked.

"Not a thing, not a thing!" exclaimed Hop Soy. "You said you would kill me if I told!"

Rackley looked hard and believed.

"Keep your mouth shut and you are safe," he added. "Remember, not a word. I'm not a harsh man to those who serve me well. Be still and you are safe. Come!"

He had been told where to find Nat Allen, and they went to his room. He still lay unconscious. His wound was an ugly affair, but the outlook was good. The road-agent satisfied himself that his man was in competent hands, and then was ready to go.

The expected clash with Damon had not materialized. Hop Soy, very dangerous because of his intimate knowledge of English, had held his secret back through fear. Rackley knew that Damon was suspicious, and that his shrewd brain was busy, but Damon was in the dark both as to what had happened on his house steps and later. Until he could gather in the loose threads he was helpless.

Next Rackley saw one of the late ambushers. The man told of the shot fired by one of his party, and added his regrets, and so the crisis was passed through for the time being. Rackley borrowed a horse for Hop Soy and they rode toward the ranch. The Chinaman watched his companion's face, trembled and worried, but, finding utter silence opposed to him, he finally broke forth explosively:

"If you will let me go back as cook I will never tell. Never, never!" he exclaimed.

"Sure?"

(Continued on page fourteen.)

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The Withered Hand;

Or, The Story of a Terrible Inheritance

By HARPER W. THORNTON

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Begun in No. 40, Oct. 1. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVII.
THE KNIFE AND VICTIM.

IF HABBERTON and his friend Jack could have looked beyond the door of the secret chamber in the west wing of the house behind the larches they might have paused in their mad rush up the staircase after leaving Thaddora bound in the chair in the library.

As we have never opened that portal and displayed to the gaze of the reader the interior of that room it becomes our duty to do so now.

It was a large apartment, not entirely square. The ceiling was lofty like the ceilings of the other rooms of the old mansion. Its one window looked out upon that part of the grounds from which Habberton had seen the Hindus approach and Jack caught sight of the girl about whom hung a real mystery.

The walls of this chamber were hung in strange looking fabric upon whose surfaces were displayed mystic scenes done by the hands of Hindu women. The floor was covered with a heavy carpet into which the foot would sink and give forth no sounds. In the middle of the chamber stood what might be termed an altar over which swung what might be called a huge turban from the tip of which a dark red feather lifted its crest.

A short time before Habberton and Clawson started out to force the door of this temple, for it can be called such, the place was not occupied. A weird light filled the place and rendered the darkest parts fairly visible.

All at once a light vapor rose from a shell-like dish which stood in the center of the altar. It rose gradually and swirled lightly toward the ceiling, at the same time dispensing a pungent odor ravishing to the senses.

From out of this cloud came the figure of a human being. By what mysticism this personage was enabled to appear is not for us to explain. He seemed to grow out of the vapor itself, and at last he stood before the altar, a tall, lithe Hindu, naked to the loins and with a closely shaved cranium.

He looked the embodiment of some demon called into being for a terrible purpose. His little eyes wandered around the room and his long arms swung listlessly at his sides.

This person was the strange, redoubtable Kalmah, the high priest of fakirism and mystery and a man whose life, could it have been written on the walls of that chamber, would have been traced in blood.

He was alone in the room for some time. All at once a door at one end of the apartment slid open and forward came six white-robed men whose swarthy faces were in vivid contrast to the spectral garments.

These newcomers ranged themselves in a semi-circle about the altar and seemed to await their leader's commands.

Kalmah singled them out one by one, looking each over from head to foot and seeming to take delight in the inspection.

Suddenly he sprang away with the tenseness of a jungle tiger and struck three times upon the wall at the end of the room.

A secret door opened as if in response to his strokes and into the room of mystery came an old man. He bowed low three times before the Hindu and then stood erect.

"Does our mystic brother hear the voice of Buddha?" asked Kalmah, centering upon this individual the glare of his deep-set eyes.

"The brother hears," was the reply in tones of humiliation.

"And he is ready to obey?"

"He is ready to obey the voice of the great Buddha," was the response.

Kalmah was silent for a moment, but during that brief time he sent a swift glance at his companions.

"It is the end of the thousand years, my brother," he went on, turning again to the one in front of the altar. "The Priest of the Withered Hand, having come back to earth, is about to journey again unto the regions of doubt and darkness. The great god demands a sacrifice and the victim has been supplied."

The Hindu's voice seemed to die away among the folds of the tapestries that covered the walls and the six dark men hid one hand in their robes.

"What has our brother to say?" continued the head fakir. "Does he give to the great and powerful Buddha all the blood in his veins?"

A shiver, a slight protest unspoken, seemed to quiver the form of the aged one.

"I am ready, O, great Kalmah!" he said, not without a trembling of the lips.

"It is well. My brethren hear," and once more the eyes of Kalmah swept the group at the altar.

The following moment one of Kalmah's hands was lost in the folds of his loin-cloth, and when it came forth it clutched the handle of a knife whose long and slender blade was strangely wavy in contour.

He raised this weapon above his head and took a step toward the old man.

In the silence that filled the room the fall of a feather might have been heard.

The eyes of the dark-skinned group were glued upon Kalmah and the doomed one, but they moved not.

"Let my brother prepare to live forever!" spoke the executioner and forthwith the old man made a rapid motion and the next instant his body was bare to the waist, his garments falling from him like a loosened shroud.

Despite his years his skin was as white as a child's.

He looked not upon the scenes about him, he seemed to see not Kalmah, nor the subtle associates; his eyes were riveted upon the wavy blade lifted in midair by the hand of the Hindu.

"Let the basin be prepared for the sacred blood," suddenly said Kalmah.

One of the Hindus drew from beneath his robe a small wooden bowl which he carried forward. He placed this vessel just below the old man's heart and looked at his stern and mystic chief.

Up to that time the old man had not protested against the terrible scene about to be enacted. Terror seemed to have stilled his tongue and almost silenced the beatings of his heart.

Now, however, he started up and a fire which until then had lain dormant flashed up in his eyes.

He fell back and threw one hand above his head.

"No! no!" he cried, and his voice had a singular sound amid that deathly silence. "No! no! Let me go back to my own. Let me live!"

The face of Kalmah did not relax a muscle.

"Would my brother prove false to the teachings of the great Buddha?" he asked.

"Not that, but I would live."

"It is too late. The oath taken by my brother must be kept."

"You can have everything I possess."

"My brother possesses nothing. It has all departed from his hands."

"But I will get it back. I will throw it at the feet of the all powerful Buddha—I——"

"No!"

The monosyllable was stern and relentless.

"It is too late," once more parted Kalmah's lips. "The sacrifice must be made. It is the end of the thousand years."

There seemed no hope for the victim of fanaticism.

He was surely doomed.

The desire to escape the death of the knife, the wish to live a little longer tugged like the hands of a giant at his heart-strings. He uttered a cry, he reeled almost back to the hidden door through which he had entered that torture chamber.

"There is no escape!" cried the implacable Kalmah. "Buddha demands and his High Priest executes!"

With the wall at his back, and what a cold relentless barrier it was, blocked further retreat. The old man seemed for a moment to sink to the floor.

The Hindu with the blood-bowl advanced with a glance at Kalmah and stolidly held out the vessel.

The others remained statues at the mystic altar.

Doomed by fate, and he saw it, the old man appeared to submit at last. His hands fell listless at his side, he lifted his eyes to the ceiling and awaited the stroke.

A minute passed.

Kalmah seemed to take delight in withholding the blow as if he thought it added torture to the soul of the fated one.

Suddenly he leaped forward with the nature of a tiger.

The old man, awed by the knife, writhed against the wall and at last put out a feeble hand.

"I have betrayed ye all!" he cried. "Ye may kill but your doom is certain. Look from yon window. You will see the avengers of blood. They have come. In this land the rites of darkness are forbidden. I denounce the religion I have professed under the spell of your mesmerism. I was dead, but I live. I have betrayed ye all, tigers of the Indian jungle!"

His words seemed to bring about a sudden and terrible transformation in that room.

The five Hindus at the altar suddenly became imbued with a fear that weakened their every nerve.

Kalmah stood irresolute.

The old man laughed hysterically in their faces as he again cried out that he had betrayed them all.

CHAPTER XVIII.
WITHERED HAND AGAIN.

The following moment the light which had revealed this scene was blotted out as if by magic.

There was heard in the room a hum of voices but no footsteps. The depths of the carpet prevented.

Out of the darkness came a wild cry.

It died suddenly away as if some hand had found the maker's throat.

This was followed by the crash of a door for some one had plunged against it from the outside and then came momentary silence again.

"There is nothing here," said a voice.

"Nothing but darkness," was the reply.

"But I heard a cry just before you struck the portal, Jack."

"Aye, and so did I."

"Strike a light and let us see what this devil's nest reveals."

In another instant the light of a match flamed up and a hand held it above a man's head.

"It's the nest of mystery sure enough," said Habberton. "Here is the altar and yonder lies a wooden bowl."

"We have come too late. The birds have flown."

"They shall not escape us. That wild cry came not from the lips of a Hindu."

The match flickered and went out. Habberton and Clawson went to the door and looked out into the hall.

Nothing but the walls and floor was there.

"They can't be far off," Habberton said. "We shall find the trail. Perhaps Kalmah is yet in hiding somewhere in the house."

They bolted down the corridor to the end of it and were forced to turn back. A solid wall faced them.

They raced toward the east wing and found the door of Janus' little room. It was empty, not even old Drusilla was there.

For a moment they stood there nonplused.

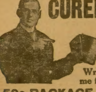
"To the rooms below! We left Thaddora in the library. Perhaps she has seen the fugitives."

Three steps at a time they went down the staircase.

The library was dark.

"Thaddora!" cried Habberton as he switched on the light flooding the apartment in a brilliant glow.

ASTHMA CATARRH CURED



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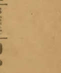

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GENTLE JABS.

Never judge a picture by its frame.

A man thinks his stubbornness is pride.

Time flies, but the orchestra leader can beat it.

Worry never accomplished anything worth while.

Second thoughts are best in a case of love at first sight.

It takes a lot of sand to enable a man to go up in a balloon.

Most people grieve $2 worth every time they lose a dollar.

What's bred in the bone is weighed out to us by the butcher.

But fame seldom comes to the man who sits down and waits.

Speed mania is a disease, but the messenger boy is an immune.

We wonder what Eve fussed about before Adam learned to smoke.

Some people try to substitute buttermilk for that of human kindness.

Give some people a bite of an apple and they'll want all but the core.

Physical culture never extends to the carrying of our neighbor's burdens.

Economy on your part would be stinginess on the part of your neighbor.

A man can repent of almost anything if it hits his pocketbook hard enough.

Don't marry a liberal-minded woman. She'll frequently give you a piece of it.

If the dinner is a failure a woman can blame it on something the grocer sent.

When two women kiss it doesn't mean any more than when two men shake hands.

A man seldom measures his own faults and those of his neighbor by the same rule.

It's surprising how quickly a woman puts on weight when she sits on her husband's lap.

Many an alleged blessing in disguise wouldn't be a blessing but for the disguise.

When a woman finds marriage is a failure she wants a divorce so that she can try again.

Some people are unable to pocket their pride because they haven't a pocket large enough.

The honest theatrical manager believes every man is entitled to a show for his money.

Even those who think twice before they speak are apt to have another think coming after they have spoken.

If the modern prodigal would partake of the obese veal it's up to him to hurry home before the summer boarders arrive.

The novelist who marries his hero to a suffragette will have a hard task to convince his readers that they are going to live happily ever after.

It is proved by the Review of Reviews that the moving-picture shows are the chief American amusement today. Five years ago any race track gambler would have laughed any such prophecy to scorn.

(Continued from page five.)

The chair in which they had left the girl was empty and Habberton stared at it unable to articulate a word.

"She is gone!" he said at last in a fearsome whisper as he glanced at Jack.

Then he went hastily over to the curtained niche and snatched aside the heavy folds.

The Ace of Diamonds like a great doomful optic was staring at him.

He clutched madly at it, tore away what came into his hand and the light revealed the portrait of his uncle.

"Look! What infernal magic!" he cried.

Suddenly a cry fell upon their ears and there tumbled into the room to fall prostrate upon the tiger rug the form of old Drusilla.

Habberton picked her up and plumped her without ceremony into the chair.

She turned upon them a face almost idiotic in expression and shook her head.

"What have you seen? Where are the demons of darkness?" he demanded.

There was no reply.

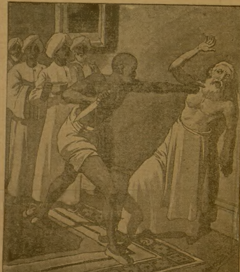
"Let the old hag go," Habberton went on. "We must find Thaddora. After her Kalmah——"

"And perhaps the deluge," grinned Jack.

They rushed away, leaving the old woman to tennant the library and sprang up the steps again.

"Why not the grounds?" said Jack at last. "There were more voices than one in the secret room."

Out in the grove where soft starlight sifted through the weird branches they ran to and fro. They seemed like bloodhounds that have lost the trail.



No! No! Let me live!"

"They have escaped us," dolefully admitted Habberton. "We have been foiled at the threshold of success."

Once more back in the library they sat down and reflected. The house of the larches fell into a ghostly stillness.

"This is tantalizing," suddenly ejaculated Habberton. "Ere this perhaps Kalmah and his companions have hidden themselves among some of their cult within the city."

"Doubtless," said Jack coolly. "I'm going to have a nap."

"Not I,' remarked Habberton. "I will keep ward here till morning."

He bade Clawson good night and saw him vanish in the hall.

Pulling the arm-chair up to the table he placed his revolver on the cloth and sat down for his vigil.

The silence seemed to deepen.

Once or twice he glanced at the parted curtains and saw the face of his uncle regarding him from the niche.

"If the painted lips could speak the mystery would be solved," he said to himself. "In the name of heaven why was I made sole heir?"

At last he fell into a slumber which chased from his mind all thoughts of his surroundings.

When he opened his eyes he found that the light had become subdued and that there were shadows in the far corners of the room. The dark-bound volumes on the shelves were barely discernible, the figures in the wall paper were no longer obvious.

Added to this a strange feeling brought about by his surroundings had him in thrall.

Noticing his revolver he picked it up and uttered a cry. It was useless for every chamber was empty!

All at once he fell back in the chair and stared at a corner where one section of the bookcase ended.

A hand protruded from the wall.

It was the same dark, withered hand he had seen before at the same spot.

In an instant Habberton's every sense was on the alert.

The cunningness and tigerism of his nature sprang into being.

He slipped from the chair and moved around the wall toward that spectral hand.

He saw the long, ghostly fingers feeling for a certain book.

If he could only seize the wrist, if he could trap that hand he would solve the mystery of the Black Larches.

He thought of Jack, but dared not summon him.

Nearer and nearer he came to the hand at the wall.

The fingers touched the book and were tugging to get possession of it.

If the six Hindus had shown themselves at the open door Habberton would not have seen them. He had an eye for but one object, the mummified hand after the mystic tome.

All at once Habberton leaped upon his prey.

His eager hand shot straight at the target, his fingers closed about the attenuated wrist and he held on for dear life.

The shriveled fingers were suddenly closed.

He shuddered to discover that they were as cold as ice.

Not a sound followed the capture of the withered hand.

Habberton exerted all his strength and tried to draw the arm into the light, but without avail.

Who was on the opposite side of the wall he did not know.

Suddenly he raised his voice to the highest pitch.

He shouted for Jack with all his might and his cry rang through the house awaking every slumbering echo.

"Jack! Jack! for God's sake come!"

All at once he heard some one plunging down the staircase.

The following second Habberton fell back, measuring his length on the floor, and as Jack dashed into the room he held up to his distended eyes the withered hand!

CHAPTER XIX.
THE LIVING DEAD.

For a moment—in reality it seemed an age—Clawson was unable to speak.

His gaze flitted from Habberton to the hand and back once more to his friend's face.

"It was yonder," said Habberton, rising. "It came through the solid wall—in yon corner. It was filching a book from the bookcase. It was after the same volume it took before, the one with the prophecy of the return of the Withered Hand, you know."

Jack sprang across the room and halted on the spot indicated by Habberton.

"The wall is solid," Delos heard him say. "By Jove! it cannot be and yet——"

"'Tis some infernal Hindu magic. Where is the owner of that hand?"

"On the other side of the wall, of course."

Clawson bounded from the room and was gone some five minutes.

"I find no corridor," he said upon his return and upon his face shone a mystery. "Everything seems solid enough."

Habberton was examining the wall and all at once he gave Jack a startled look.

"Here is the smallest sort of crack," he said. "There must be a space somewhere."

Before Clawson could reply or investigate a voice sounded and both stared toward the hall.

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"Thaddora!" exclaimed Habberton and he knew he was gazing once more into the girl's face.

Thaddora came forward with a faint smile at the corners of her ashen lips.

Her gaze suddenly fell upon the hand on the tiger-skin rug and she stopped short immediately afterward, throwing a look of amazement at the two men.

"How came it yonder?" she cried, pointing at the ghastly object.

Habberton explained in a few words and Thaddora listened with all ears.

"It's the hand of Kalmah," said she.

"Well?"

"You may never have known him as the High Priest of the Withered Hand——"

"I have known him as a fiend of darkness and a devil incarnate," replied Habberton.

"He is all that and more. Rather than be captured he left his hand with you."

She was smiling again, that smile which had caught Habberton's heart from the first.

"But how could he have thrust his hand through a solid wall?"

"Kalmah is a man of expedients. He is the prince of jugglers. He can do anything."

She went over to the chair and sat down.

"I did not remain tied long," she resumed, looking into Habberton's inquisitive face. "I was released by a hand which came out of the dark, for the lights were suddenly shut off. I made my way out of the house and wandered in the grove almost bereft of my senses. You call me Thaddora——"

"What should I call you?"

"The Priestess of the Withered Hand!"

"But you are that no longer," cried Habberton. "The power of the band of intrigue is broken. We have rushed the door of the hidden room, we have seen the altar and—"

"And you found the last victim?"

"There was no victim."

"No victim, you say?" and Thaddora looked incredulous. "Was there no blood in the sacrificial bowl?"

"The bowl lay upturned on the floor and it was dry."

Her wonderment seemed to increase.

"Then, what has become of the victim? You must have interrupted the sacrifice."

"That is not for us to say," Habberton said. "If there was to have been a sacrifice in the hidden chamber we found no signs of it. Who was to have been the victim?"

"The quick and the dead," answered Thaddora with a mysterious gesture. "Let us see."

She rose and led the way from the room.

"The hand?" said Jack pausing at the door.

"Let it lie," answered Habberton.

They passed up the staircase and down the west corridor. The portal of the forbidden apartment stood open. Thaddora entered and looked around.

"You must have interrupted the sacrifice," she said a moment later. "Everything was in readiness. Here is the bowl which Damah holds out for the blood of the victim. He held it once before my heart, but it was withdrawn when I promised to become the High Priestess of the Withered Hand. Let me not narrate my adventures with the fiends of India. I would forget them all. I was mesmerized by Kalmah's mystic powers. I was as potter's clay in his hands. But now, thank heaven, his power is broken and I am Thaddora once more."

Habberton could have taken her in his arms and told her how overjoyed he was to know that she had escaped the machinations of the king of fakirs.

"The last victim must be somewhere," continued Thaddora.

"We'll find him if we have to raze the house!" exclaimed Habberton.

She passed from wall to wall, lifting the tapestry and peering behind it.

"There were some secrets which I was never to know," she said glancing at the silent and watchful couple. "Perchance had I remained Priestess they would have come to me. Once I saw Kalmah strike upon the wall here."

Thaddora had halted at a certain spot where the wall rose bare to the ceiling.

"Try it," said Habberton, breathlessly. "It may be worth a trial."

Thaddora raised her hand and struck three times at a certain place, then drew off and waited with white face.

Slowly to the astonishment of all three a door opened in the bare wall.

"A secret chamber!" cried Habberton.

"The chamber where the victim awaited the sacrifice," said Thaddora.

In another moment both Habberton and Clawson were at the threshold staring into the space that greeted them. It was dim beyond the narrow door. They craned their necks forward and looked without a word.

"The very victim has escaped," said Delos.

All at once there rose before them among the shadows of the little apartment the figure of a man.

The investigators recoiled and stared at the figure as it advanced till it stood in the light that filtered into the main chamber from the hall where a single light turned on by Habberton was burning.

It was the figure of an old man and the moment Habberton's eyes rested upon it the portrait in the niche in the library flashed across his vision.

"The dead lives!" he cried with a startled look. "My Uncle Tinus!"

A strange, low laugh rippled over Jack's lips.

"It is just what I suspected ever since I heard Mr. Polly's story," said he. "Old Drusilla and Marie saw that face, but we would not believe, Delos——"

He was interrupted by the voice of the personage who had emerged from the little room.

"In India a man dies to all outward appearances and is brought back to life. It is the secret of such men like Kalmah. They have power over the very breath of life. The day of my mad infatuation is over. I have renounced the doctrines of darkness and mystery. I am no longer the slave of Buddha. Once more I am Tinus Timpson in the flesh."

"And the Black Larches passes from my hands, thank heaven!" cried Habberton.

The old man slowly turned upon the late heir and studied him some time in utter silence.

"We will discuss that matter in the library," he said and the next moment was walking toward the hall.

The three wonder-struck spectators watched him in silence and followed in his footsteps.

"What is this?" cried Tinus Timpson, recoiling at sight of the withered hand on the tiger-rug.

"You should know, for it has been the bane of your existence," answered Thaddora, as her hand fell softly upon the old man's arm. "It is the dread hand of the mysterious Kalmah."

"And he——"

"It came out of the wall yonder," put in Habberton. "I seized it and it came away in my hand."

"Aha! the narrow space between the two walls!" and old Tinus smiled.

"There is no space," persisted the late heir, but Timpson held up his hand.

"The thousand-and-one mysteries of this house have not all been revealed," said he and thereupon he led the way from the library.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER ALL—LOVE.

An hour later a little party was assembled in the library of the Black Larches.

The night was verging on toward daylight, but they took no note of this. Outside the wind was blowing a gale through the long branches of the old trees and drops of rain were pattering against the narrow, old-fashioned windows.

The little group of anxious ones sat about an old man who reclined in an arm-chair with one hand resting on the table upon which lay something covered with a cloth.

"I shall send that thing yonder," spoke Tinus Timpson with a nod, "to the anatomical museum. I dare say it will prove a curiosity, not only for its curious structure, but because of its associations. The moment I conducted you to the narrow space between the walls and opened the door I knew that we should find there the owner of that hand. Finding that he could not loosen your grip, my dear nephew, Kalmah deliberately severed his hand at the wrist with the curiously shaped knife and bled to death in the secret space.

"The man was a fanatic. From the moment he crossed by path I knew he was to have a wonderful and fatal influence on my life. By degrees under his skill and mesmeric powers I became the mad disciple of the gods he worshiped. I seemed to lose my identity. When I made the will which bestowed the Black Larches upon you, Delos, I knew that I was leaving you a terrible legacy, but I was crazed. The time came when I apparently died. The mystic sign of the Ace of Diamonds which is placed upon the cold brows of all the victims of this dark league was placed on mine and I was buried. It was but a case of suspended animation which would deceive the most expert men of science. How long I lay in my burial robes I do not know. That secret died with Kalmah.

"When I came back to life I seemed to have another being. I was, yet was not, Tinus Timpson. I became the slave and the victim of Kalmah and his associates. Janus fell before their hands and wore the sign. Old Drusilla wore it, too, but strangely escaped with her life. This house is a network of dark machinery put in by the infernal ingenuity of the master spirit of the plot. By the pressure of a button in the hidden chamber in the west wing my portrait in yon niche gives way for the Ace of Diamonds and vice versa.

"I would have objected to the coils which Kalmah threw about Thaddora, but I was powerless. She was drawn to this house by some unseen, unescapable power known only to the man who severed his own wrist. She was utterly helpless in the hands of this strange being. Once when old Drusilla caught sight of me and fainted in the upper corridor, I tried to throw off the spell and then I discovered how helpless I was. I was on the eve of becoming the victim of blood when you and Mr. Clawson yonder rushed the door above. Damah held the blood-bowl at my breast and the knife was lifted. Had you remained aloof another minute my story would never have been told.

"You have told me, Mr. Clawson," and the old man turned toward Jack, "you have told me something about the Pichegru case which puzzled you years ago in Paris. There was a cunning Hindu connected with it, I believe."

"A cool, calculating wretch like Kalmah," said Jack.

"Just so. He escaped you then?"

"Yes."

A smile gathered at Timpson's mouth.

"You are at the end of the Pichegru case," he resumed. "The Hindu who eluded you in Paris lies dead in the little space beyond yonder wall."

"Is that true?"

"I have the proofs," and the old man rose and took a book from the shelf. "Here," said he coming back to the table, "here is what you cannot read for it is traced in the mystic language of the Orient. This is the diary of that strange man. Because of his withered hand he became the high priest of mysticism. He was detailed to advance the cause of Buddha in this country and I must say that never had a dark religion a better agent. In this book is the story of the Pichegru crime. It is the confession of Kalmah, the man who eluded you so mysteriously in the French capital. This is the book which the withered hand would have taken for the last time if the grip of Delos had not interfered.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Habberton.

"Darkly so," was the reply. "I shall burn all those accursed books. In fire shall vanish the last of my strange enthralment. I am once more Tinus Timpson."

"You'll give Mr. Polly a fright," smiled Jack. "The little old fellow should have the news broken to him as gently as possible. He has nerves, you know."

"And I have at last a conscience," was the reply. "You must tell me about your mother's last days, Delos. I wronged, hated her and that is why I left you this terrible legacy. As for old Drusilla——"

"She is here now," interrupted Thaddora, as the figure of the old servant appeared in the doorway.

The next moment a cry rang through the room and the aged form of old Drusilla was seen to totter on the threshold.

"The dead master!" she wailed, covering her face with her hands. "I knew I saw him in the upper corridor. They would not believe me. They laughed in my face when I told them. I knew all the time I had seen him. It is the old master——"

Two days later the door of Mr. Polly's office was gently opened; a man tripped lightly across the oilcloth. The little thin-faced lawyer was bent over his desk absorbed in a brief.

"Mr. Polly——"

Phineas Polly turned and raised his head. All at once his little piggish eyeballs seemed

(Continued on page twelve.)

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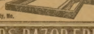

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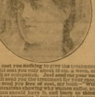

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To Fit the Space.

"I like the house, all right," said the prospective tenant of the suburban place, "but the front yard is so awfully small. Why, there isn't even room for a single flower bed."

"Well," replied the agent, "you—er—might put in a folding bed."

Next!

It was Saturday evening in the barber shop.

"Boy," said the man who had been waiting two hours, "what kind of a plant is that growing out there is the back yard?"

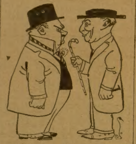
"That, sir, is a century plant," responded the wielder of shoebrushes.

"It is, eh? Well, I'll have the chance of seeing it bloom."

"Bloom! Why, boss, that plant only blooms every hundred years."

"Oh, well, it'll bloom before my turn comes in the chair, anyway."

Different Shakes.



Bink—Rounder's best girl made him shake cards.

Wink—Poor chap, I guess he finds it hard to kill time. What's he doing?

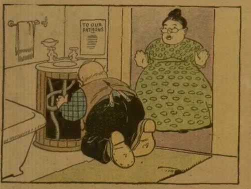
Bink—Why, now he shakes dice.

More Time.

"Then you find the fireless cooker a convenience?"

"Yes, indeed. Now I can join another bridge club."

HIS FIRST VISIT.



Mrs. Hardapple (in city hotel)—Hiram, what in the world are you doing at that washstand?

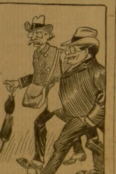
Mr. Hardapple—Looking for the stationery, Cynthia. The clerk said this was a stationary washstand and I want some stationery to write home on.

His Real Passion.

First Heiress—I understand Count De Macaroni is paying court to you. Is he an ardent suitor?

Second Heiress—Oh, no, he's a frenzied financier.

The Faunal Naturalist.



"A little while ago I found a piece of a snake which at first glance I took to be the poisonous 'Pelias.' Upon closer inspection, however, I saw that I was wrong."

"I wager I know—it was the harmless 'Tropidonotus natrix.'"

"No—it was a piece of garden hose."

In After Years.

For three long, weary years they had been up against the matrimonial game.

Together they were meandering down the street, when the wife paused in front of a jeweler's window.

"Do you remember, dear," she said, "how we used to stop here and look at the wedding rings—one of which I am wearing now?"

"Ah, yes!" rejoined the husband, reflectively. "Those were happy days."

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Nothing but Square.

The One—I suppose you live high at your new boarding house?

The Other—Well, we get three square meals a day.

The One—That's good.

The Other—Say not so. They are served in the form of soda crackers.

A CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY.

Many Americans are taking up the 5-acre fruit tracts and city lots now being offered free in Mexico. The only requirements are to have fruit trees planted within 5 years. Even the planting and care of the trees will be done on shares for those who can't go or do not care to go. The fruit grows bountifully and matures lusciously and commands very high prices. The Jantha Plantation Co., Section 593, Pittsburg, Pa., is the U. S. office for receiving applications. Particulars on request.

Mislaid.

The hen returned to her nest, only to find it empty.

"Very funny," said she; "I can never find things where I lay them."

THE HOBBLE-SKIRT CRAZE.

We used to ridicule and talk
Of the saucy maid with the kangaroo walk
As she tripped over the asphalt or cobble;
But the latest walk that's booked for the fall
(And we wonder sometimes how they walk at all)
Is the walk with the horrible hobble.

Raised Skyward.

The suburban man was all sympathy.

"What's the trouble, my dear?" he asked, as he came home and found his wife in tears.

"T-trouble enough," sobbed his young wife, "you k-know that five d-dollar incubator the man sold me? Well, it exploded today and blew all the chickens through the roof."

"Oh, well, cheer up, Martha. The man said it would raise chickens and you see it did."

Wordy Wars.

Mrs. Stubb—I think these newspaper paragraphers are horrid. They are hinting that our new fall hats look like war bonnets.

Mr. Stubb—Well, they are war bonnets, Maria.

Mrs. Stubb—But where does the war come in, John?

Mr. Stubb—When the husband gets the bill.

Industrious.

"So your club is going to give a lecture tonight?" said the tall suffragette. "What will be the topic?"

"Home industries," responded the president.

"And what do you consider 'home industries?'"

"Why, our husbands who remain at home and mind the babies and wash the dishes while we attend the club."

The Amateur.

Stern Parent—Learning to dance, eh? Well, four hours every evening is too long for you to be on your feet, young man.

Son—But, pa, I am only on my feet two hours.

Stern Parent—Two hours? How do you make that out?

Son—Why, the rest of the time I am on my partner's feet.

Great, Indeed.

"I would like to ask you one more question," said the youth.

"Let it come," rejoined the home-grown philosopher.

"When," queried the youth, "would you say that a man has achieved greatness?"

"When he deserves his own opinion of himself," answered back the h. g. p.

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

Rather Tough.

"Women may be weak," boasted the landlady, "but there is certainly no weakness in my poultry raising."

"I should say not," commented the stellar boarder as he picked a section of a leatherized chicken wing, "you are there with the bone and sinew."

How to Get Rid of Catarrh.

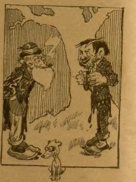
A Simple, Safe, Reliable Way, and It Costs Nothing to Try.

Those who suffer from catarrh know its miseries. There is no need of this suffering. You can get rid of it by a simple, safe, inexpensive, home treatment discovered by Dr. Blosser, who, for over thirty-five years, has been treating catarrh successfully.

His treatment is unlike any other. It is not a spray, douche, salve, cream, or inhaler, but is a more direct and thorough treatment than any of these. It cleans out the head, nose, throat and lungs so that you can again breathe freely and sleep without that stopped-up feeling that all catarrh sufferers have. It heals the diseased mucous membranes and arrests the foul discharge, so that you will not be constantly blowing your nose and spitting, and at the same time it does not poison the system and ruin the stomach, as internal medicines do.

If you want to test this treatment without cost, send your address to Dr. J. W. Blosser, 27 Walton Street, Atlanta, Ga., and he will send you by return mail enough of the medicine to satisfy you that it is all he claims for it as a remedy for catarrh, catarrhal headaches, catarrhal deafness, asthma, bronchitis, colds and all catarrhal complications. He will also send you free an illustrated booklet. Write him immediately.

Worthless.



Waggles—My ancestors belonged to the nobility.

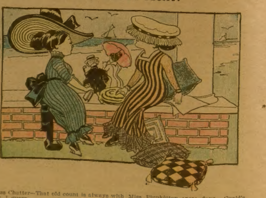
Shuffles—I guess the nobility was glad when slavery was abolished if your ancestors were anything like you.

Timid Man.

"But why in the world did your husband select such a high bed?" asked Mrs. Barker in surprise. "Why, it would be so convenient for a burglar to crawl under it."

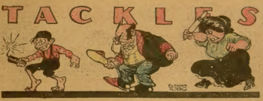
"Oh, no," laughed Mrs. Barker; "my husband selected a high bed so he could crawl under it if he heard a burglar."

GOT IT ABOUT RIGHT.



Miss Chatter—That old count is always with Miss Plunkinton these days. Cupid's busy, I guess.

Mrs. Noovo—Yes; there's lots of cupidity about.



WISE WORDS

A Physician on Food.

A physician of Portland, Oregon, has views about food. He says:

"I have always believed that the duty of the physician does not cease with treating the sick, but that we owe it to humanity to teach them how to protect their health, especially by hygienic and dietetic laws.

"With such a feeling as to my duty I take great pleasure in saying to the public that in my own experience and also from personal observation I have found no food to equal Grape-Nuts, and that I find there is almost no limit to the great benefit this food will bring when used in all cases of sickness and convalescence.

"It is my experience that no physical condition forbids the use of Grape-Nuts. To persons in health there is nothing so nourishing and acceptable to the stomach, especially at breakfast, to start the machinery of the human system on the day's work.

"In cases of indigestion I know that a complete breakfast can be made of Grape-Nuts and cream and I think it is not advisable to overload the stomach at the morning meal. I also know the great value of Grape-Nuts when the stomach is too weak to digest other food.

"This is written after an experience of more than 20 years, treating all manner of chronic and acute diseases, and the letter is written voluntarily on my part without any request for it."

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

True Enough.

"Now," said the teacher smilingly, "who knows what a skeleton is?"

A little girl wearing a clean pinafore and occupying the back seat, waved her hand wildly and worked her mouth in her endeavor to get the teacher to look at her.

"Well, what is it?"

"A skeleton is a man who has his insides outside and his outsides off."

FREE ASTHMA CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 113 Lane Building, St. Mary's, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

Matter cf Choice.

Barton—Is it true that you are engaged to Miss Richleigh?

Ardup—Yes; and she's awfully exacting. She says I'll have to give up smoking and drinking when we are married.

Barton—Huh! Why don't you break off the engagement?

Ardup—Can't afford to. If I don't marry her I shall have to give up eating as well or go to work.

Preferable.

Mr. Askum (after the performance)—I shouldn't think you'd care to take part in amateur theatricals.

Miss Smart (one of the cast)—I don't; but if I didn't I'd probably have to sit in the audience.

Must Be Identified.

"De world owes you a livin', son," said Uncle Eben, "but yo's got to do some work to git yo'se'f identified as de feller it's comin' to."

Practical Suggestion.

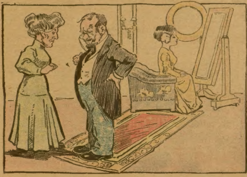
"He loves me, he loves me not," murmured the romantic summer boarder.

"You must have picked a thousand daisies to pieces today," remarked the old farmer.

"Possibly I have."

"Couldn't ye play the game just as well with potato bugs?"

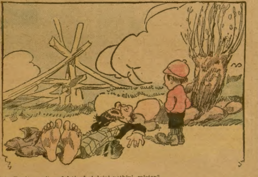
FERTILE MIND.



Fond Mother—Doctor, my daughter sits and gazes into that mirror for hours at a time. I can't get her to take exercise.

Doctor—I prescribe another mirror at the other end of the room.

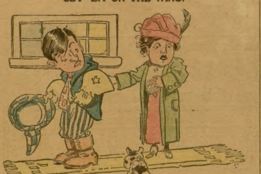
NO KICK COMING.



Boy—Don't ye git awful tired o' doin' nothin', mister?

Tramp—Yop! But I don't complain. Everybody has their troubles.

GET 'EM ON THE WING.



Helen—Oh, Edwin, I don't think it would be safe for us to fly in your aeroplane.

Edwin—Why not, dearest?

Helen—You know papa is one of the best wing shots at the country club.

The Evidence.

"How did you get here, my poor man?" asked the benevolent caller in the prison.

"Der was a woman in de case, mum," sighed the tall wrong-doer.

"Ah, bigamy, eh? They told me you were in for stealing a watch."

"And so I am, mum. De owner of de watch had his wife's picture in de case and dat's how I was identified."

Savors of the Truth.

"Old people," remarked the moralizer, "are just as foolish as young ones."

"That's right," rejoined the demoralizer. "The only difference is in the brand of folly."

Judicial Persistency.

"Let me see," mused the police magistrate, "this is the ninth time you have been up before me."

"That's right," replied the culprit. "It looks to me like you had a lifetime job."

A Waiting Game.

The airship inventor had attempted to fly, but the attempt had been a failure.

"When will you attempt another flight?" asked the inquisitive friend.

"I don't know," answered the inventor. "Think I will wait awhile and give Congress a chance to repeal the laws of gravitation."

Couldn't Tell a Lie.

Kind Lady—Aren't you the man I gave a piece of cake to last spring?

The Hobo—I'm dat same, ma'am.

Kind Lady—I suppose you have been at work ever since?

The Hobo—I can't tell er lie, ma'am, I've bin in de horspittle ever since.

It Was General.

Giff—My wife has developed a great passion for singing!

Gaff—Yes; but it's nothing to the passion your wife's singing arouses in the neighborhood.

No Time for Trifles.

Howe—Did you ask that man for his daughter?

Wise—Yes; and he said it was too near election day to talk of inconsequential trifles.

Unspoiled.

"Has success changed Green any?"

"Not a bit. He and his wife still eat their breakfast in the kitchen."

Triumphant Youth.

Willie—How can you go in swimming without being caught?

Johnny—Go in the rain.

AGENTS WANTED

$18 to $30 A WEEK SURE 10 TOOLS IN ONE Farmers "Ever-Ready" Tool Kit does it. Agents going wild over results. M. Snyder made $46 in 2 hrs. Joseph Pine took 42 orders in two days. M. D. Finch sold 42 in 9 hrs. Had no experience. You can do it. To show it means a sale. FREE SAMPLE to workers. Foote Mfg. Co., Dept. 702 Dayton, O.

LEARN to make Mirrors and make big money at home. Partic. for stamp. MacMasters, D36, Peru, Ind

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. [illegible] AGENCY Co., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

BASKETS MADE OF STEEL WIRE. Half bushel size, 20c; Bushel size, 30c. AGENTS WANTED. Bivins Basket Co., Bivins, Texas

AGENTS WANTED in every town in U. S.; sell made-to-measure Worsted Trousers. Only tailoring concern in country weaving cloth. Write Colonial Worsted Mills, Lawrence, Mass., Dept. 23

AGENTS $36 A WEEK EXPENSES PAID. No experience or capital required, 30 days credit; photo pillow tops 10c; enlarged portraits, bromides, paintings, frames; lowest prices; samples and catalogue free. Dept. Z. Ritter Art Studio, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c. Sheet Pictures 1c, Stereoscopes 25c, Views 1c. Thirty Days' Credit. Samples and Catalog Free. CONSOLIDATED PORTRAIT Co., Dept. [illegible] W. Adams St., CHICAGO

DON'T ACCEPT an agency until you get my samples and particulars. MONEY MAKERS. Address SAYMAN, 601 Sayman Building, St. Louis, Mo.

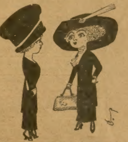
AGENTS NINE IN ONE $75 monthly. Combination Rolling Pin. Nine articles combined. Lightning Seller. Sample free. FORSHEE MFG. CO., Box 408 Dayton, O.

10 IN ONE. Most useful small tool made. Nickeled Key Ring, Nail Cutter, Cleaner, Eraser, Pencil Sharpener, Watch Case Opener, Pipe Cleaner, Cigar Clipper, Bottle Opener, Screw Driver. Sample 10c. Agents w't'd. The R.W.Trader Co., 23 Duane St., New York

Live Agents Wanted

Hustlers to handle our attractive combination packages of soap and toilet articles with valuable premiums. One Michigan agent made $65 in 47 hrs., another $21 in 8 hrs., another $22.50 in 10 hrs. Write today. E. M. DAVIS SOAP CO., 1472 Carroll Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Tart.



Kitty Flies—Just think, the editor of that new comic paper proposed to me last night.

Belle Wings—Yes; I hear he has been accepting a great many jokes of late.

AGENTS My Sanitary Coffee Maker produces pure, sweet coffee, needs no settler and never wears out. Saves coffee, money and health. Every wife buys at sight; new invention; exclusive territory. Send 15c. for 50c. size, postpaid. DR. LYONS, 429 Day St., Pekin, Ill.

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AGENT in each county to sell our Aluminum Coffee Maker for 25c. 500 other good sellers. Write quick for territory. Samples free. Freight and express allowances. $100 to $200 per month now being made by Phillips Agents. Proposition free. One of the largest agency supply houses in America. THE PHILLIPS CO. E. Phillips Building, Dayton, Ohio.

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Nulite Table Lamp! A beautiful lamp for homes, hotels, offices, stores, banks cafes. Portable, safe, can be turned upside down or rolled on the floor without danger or affecting the light. 300 C. P. of Soft Brilliant light ¼c per hour. AGENTS We want town, county and traveling salesmen. Best proposition ever offered. Sells everywhere. No experience necessary. Write for Special Offer. CHICAGO SOLAR LIGHT CO., 208 S. Jefferson St., Chicago

AGENTS, HURRAH! GET RICH Get your $10 daily; unexpected, glorious, wonderful opportunity; agent worked 3 hours, made $44; another sold 15 after dinner; another $53 first day; don't envy them; do likewise; simply give all or spare time exhibiting what every family buys—our wonderful, self-heating, indestructible fountain syringe; 100% profit; free sample. Credit on sales. Mere postal brings startling proposition. Sanitary Supply Co., Box 158 Sta. F. Toledo, O.

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Send your name and address and we will send you 12 Beautiful Oriental Rings to sell at 10 cents each. All the rage in New York. When sold return us $1.20 and get these four Solid Gold Laid Rings Free, also our 20-page premium catalog listing 100 premiums and how to get them. STAUFFER & CO., 745 Orient St., Palmyra, Pa.

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C. E. BROOKS, 3683 Brooks Building, Marshall, Mich.

Frank Doulton at Sea;

Or, Meeting Wild Adventures

By FRANK E. CHANNON

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Begun in No. 40, Oct. 1. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER X.

HE COULD not sleep. He tossed about on this side and on that for a long time, and when at last he closed his eyes, he dreamed—dreamed the wildest, strangest dreams imaginable. Now he was on the great mountain on the island. Mr. Glass and Sam and Jerry were there. The warships lay below, sending their shots fast amongst them. Then he was in the sea fighting for his life with the waves. Now the skipper of the Homer was chasing him, and then the mysterious stranger in the cavern was shooting at him. He was back on the island again and clinging for dear life to a rope from the mountainside. His father was calling to him from below. He tried to go to him, but he could not move. His mother called to him; he tried to answer, but his tongue refused to speak—and then, suddenly, with a start, he awoke.

It was broad morning and the brilliant sun was streaming in through the little round porthole. For a moment he could not recollect what had occurred, and then it all came to him, and tumbling out of his bunk, he hastily dressed and went out on deck.

A busy waterfront lay right in front. Men with carts and wheelbarrows were emptying the "Crow" of her cargo. All was bustle and confusion. And what a wreck did the gallant vessel look. Hammered and battered. Funnel and mast gone. The deck a mass of wire ropes and wreckage. Nuts and bolts; great bars of iron, all twisted and warped out of shape. He leaned over the side. It was dented and perforated with holes. The ship was listing over to port, and settling badly by the stern. Dark, ugly-looking blotches of dull red stained the deck. But despite all, the cranes were swung out and the work of disembarkation going busily on.

He gazed out to sea; the great gray warships kept their watch in grim silence. A few flags fluttered from their main trucks. He turned away with a shudder. He remembered that they must pass again these watching dogs, for they lay between him and home.

Home! What a flood of memory that word brought up. How far away seemed that home. How long since he had seen his dear ones. He stifled a sob and turned resolutely away. There was work to do, he must live in the present and let the future take care of itself. He went forward and sought for the captain, but he was not about. The second officer, who was in charge, told the boy that the "old man" had gone ashore, leaving a message for Frank to follow as soon as he awoke, and to meet him at "The Hotel de Saavedra." In an hour's time Frank was there, and in response to his inquiries for Captain Hall, was shown up into a large front room, where he found him in company with several other gentlemen.

The conversation was conducted in Spanish, and Frank was unable to follow it, but from time to time Captain Hall turned around, and translated some sentence or remark. He caught now and again some snatches of the conversation which he was able to understand. A tall, dignified-looking gentleman at the far end of the table made a long speech. He concluded with much gesture:

"Guerra al cuchillo!" he shouted fiercely (War to the knife).

Then some of the company nodded toward Frank, and one exclaimed:

"Acerta errando!" (He blunders into the right).

At that some of them patted Frank on the back and cried "Bravo!"

"El carazon manda las carnes!" (The heart bears up the body) cried another, enthusiastically.

Then there was a lot of low conversation, and some nodding toward Frank, and Captain Hall came over from the other side of the table and said:

"They want you to undertake a mission for them."

"Me!" cried Frank, in surprise.

"No other—listen, and I'll tell you; you haven't got to do it if you don't want to. It's a dangerous job, but you are a smart lad, and there's money in it if you get through. This is how the land lies: This city is hemmed in by land as well as from sea. Unless help comes they will be obliged to give in. Now there is another strong force of 'Rebels' somewhere near Gaviao, on the river 'Contas.' They want to get word to them. Several times they have tried to run out to sea past the squadron here," and Captain Hall nodded out harborways, "but they've always got caught. They wanted me to take my craft up the coast and get them word, but as I tell 'em The Crow can't go on dry land, and that Contas River is pretty much dry land in places; it is so shallow a canoe with a feather for cargo couldn't get past. Then they wanted to know if I had a trusty man I could spare. You see they don't want to send out any of their own men, for they feel sure their faces and tongue would give them away, but they thought if they could get hold of a real, green, raw chap, he might put up a good bluff of being a foreigner here on business or pleasure or something of that sort, and manage to skin past the lines outside this place and make good to the Contas River with some message or other. Now, it's up to you to say if you want to go. I tell you frankly, it's a dangerous business. If the loyals get hold of you and find out who you are and where you come from, why you swing for it; that's all there is to it. If you get through, there's five thousand milries waiting for you. That sounds big, but it ain't so much as it looks. If you get it down to money, it's five hundred pounds, or twenty-five hundred dollars in United States coin, and you'll have earned it, every cent of it. Now don't be in a hurry; think it over; we have lots to talk about here. Sit down over there and figure it out. You know your own business best——"

The big skipper stopped, quite out of breath with his long speech, and Frank sat down in a rocker to ponder over the question. A year ago he would not have given it any consideration, but now, somehow, the spirit of adventure had got into him; it urged him on. Being the son of rich parents, he had always had plenty of pocket-money, so the reward did not appeal very strongly to him, but the prospect of danger did.

"I'll do it!" he muttered to himself, "hanged if I don't."

The conference was over, Captain Hall again came to Frank's side.

"Well, can you make anything of it?" he inquired.

"They want me to take a message, you say, sir?"

"That's the idea."

"I'll do it, sir."

"I thought you would; you're that kind of a boy. With any kind of luck you ought to pull through; it's even money either way, I should say."

He spoke to several of the men gathered about the table; all seemed pleased and nodded their heads toward Frank, smiling. There was considerable discussion as to whether he should be entrusted with a verbal or written message.

"Escriture buena memoria" (Writing the best memory), most of those present declared. Presently Captain Hall came over toward Frank again.

"Here," he said, "take this; it's small and easily got rid of if you're caught. There's an order on the Rebel treasury at Gaviao for five thousand milries; get the one through and you get the other. The Loyalist lines are close up to this city. You had better study the geography of the country a bit. You can't speak Spanish any, so you had better state what you are—an English lad. Tell 'em your father has been expelled by the Rebels who detained you for some time, and that now you are on your way to join him up country. You will probably find some of them who know English enough for you to make yourself understood. Now, here is a map of the country through which you will go. Make your headquarters on The Crow until you finally start. I'll help you all I can."

Frank took the small parcel. It was thin and flat, about three inches long by one broad. He looked at it, wondering where would be the safest place to conceal it.

"We'll fix that later on," observed the captain, reading his thoughts. "I don't think they have it done up in the best way."

That evening, in the privacy of the skipper's cabin, he and Frank went over the little parcel. It was addressed to a certain General de Gammapus, who Captain Hall said was the head of the Rebel forces in the Contas River country. Twelve thin pages of closely-written manuscript, together with the order on the Rebel treasury for the five thousand milries.

"Now, how'll you carry it?" questioned the skipper.

Frank shook his head. "I know of no other way except somewhere in my clothes or hat," he said.

"I know some place to beat that. Let's see your shoes. Take off the right one. That's all right."

With a jackknife the skipper carefully removed the outer sole, and secreted the thin pages between that and the inner one. Then he tacked it on again. "Now, I wonder if they'll guess that?" he questioned, as he surveyed his work. "It's an old dodge, but it often works well."

"I don't believe they'll ever think of looking there," cried Frank.

"Of course," continued the captain, "you may get through without their getting hold of you at all, but the chances are you'll be stopped and searched. Now, I've been thinking the plan over, and I figure out that your best idea will be to get through their lines here and cross the Rio Pardo. Then head straight up north, leaving Victoria de Conquisda to your east. That's a loyal town, and out of your way. The country's bare and flat; not a thing growing; very few farms, and no animals to bother you. Take a bag containing your rations. It's a good two hundred miles to Gaviao, but with good luck you can do it in eight days. If you could only take a horse, you would be better off, but you'd stand no show of getting through if mounted. Twenty-five miles a day isn't much to a lad like you. Water will be your main trouble. You'll just have to catch what you can, but this country's mighty dry around here. Carry this leather bottle. It's an old hot water bag I had aboard The Crow, but it's just the thing for your trip—sling it around you—so—that's it, then fill up whenever you get a chance, and go light on drinking. After you get to Gaviao and get through with your business, you will have to consider your further plans; there are many ways you can get off. San Salvador is not very far, and many ships leave from there for Europe. Time enough to think of that after you get through. Now take this map of the country around here; the Loyalist lines are shown here, see? Here's the best spot for you to skin through; they haven't held it long, and the chaps here rushed the pickets the other night and carried off a couple of six-pounders."

"You would start at night, wouldn't you, sir?"

"Yes, or early morning; fellows are generally tired out more then."

The big skipper left Frank pondering over the chart, and went on about his business. For two hours the boy studied it, noting every feature of the country; the Loyalist entrenchments, and other points of importance. On paper, the captain's plan for leaving the city looked a good one, but on further study, he noted where an old watermain entered the town at the far end. The map showed it to cross the loyal lines at a point about two miles from the city. It had evidently never been completed, but its outer end was some six hundred yards beyond the enemy's lines. "Now, I wonder if that is big enough for me to crawl through," mused the boy, "and if the outer end is guarded?"

He slipped on shore and made his way along the narrow, steep streets of the town to where the entrance of the main was marked on the map. An old, dilapidated-looking cottage stood over where it should be. By dint of considerable gesturing and a snatching of Spanish, he at last made the occupant of the place understand his wish to enter and look for what he sought.

"Si, si, senor!" exclaimed the man at last, and led the way down a rickety pair of steps to the cellar. It was pitch dark, and evidently never used now, but the man had understood what the boy wanted and, with much waving of hands and frequent ges-

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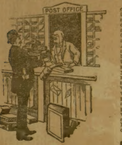

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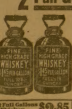

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tures, pointed triumphantly toward a bricked-in tunnel.

"Poco! Poco!" he constantly exclaimed, as Frank sought to discover if he could crawl through it.

It was indeed small, but he found out he could crawl through all right. He went up a little distance, then backed out again. It was, of course, dark as pitch, but he could carry a lantern and grope his way along.

He returned to the ship and explained his plan to the captain, who returned with him and examined the opening. The city fathers were questioned, and recollected at once. Yes, it was an old water main, but had never been completed. Its existence had been forgotten. It came out in an old sand pit a good half-mile behind the enemy's lines, but it was so "poco," so very "poco." Could the boy get through? Si? that was well, then; it was a good plan.

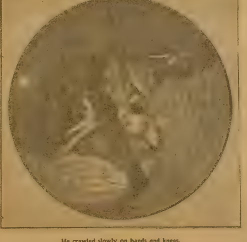
At nine o'clock that night Frank left the ship and, having made his way to the cellar, lighted his lantern and, with good wishes and many cries of "Adios!" from his well wishers, thrust his head into the narrow tunnel and crawled slowly forward.

CHAPTER XI.

His lantern dangled from his neck. His water-bottle and small sack containing his food were slung over his shoulders. The dispatch was secure between the soles of his boots. He carried six American silver dollars in his vest pocket, and a six-shooter in his pistol pocket.

He crawled slowly forward on hands and knees. There was no room to turn around Should it be necessary for him to return, he would have to back slowly. The air seemed to be fairly good; evidently the further end was open, for at times quite a current of wind swept past him. The brick formation soon gave way to regular terra cotta piping.

His progress was very slow, and his knees soon commenced to feel sore. After he judged he had crawled some four hundred yards, he stopped and looked around, or rather ahead of him. As far as the light from his lantern shone, the same piping continued. It seemed to him that sometimes he coud detect the passing of conveyances of some kind overhead, and once or twice he was sure he heard footsteps on the streets above. It was clear the main was sunk to no great depth. He resumed his laborious crawling, and what he supposed to be another three or four hundred yards. Again he stopped and listened. All was quiet as the dead. He must now be outside the city limits and in the open country, possibly under the enemy's lines. On he pushed once more. He looked at his watch, one Captain Hall had supplied him with. It was fifteen minutes after eleven o'clock. He had been a full hour in the tunnel, for it had been just ten minutes after ten when he started on his journey.



He crawled slowly on hands and knees.

Slowly, slowly he pushed on. His knees were giving him considerable pain, and the palms of his hands were sore from the contact with the rough sides. Now he commenced to look ahead, watching for the opening. He would probably come upon it without any warning; no light would beckon him on, for the night was moonless and dark. His lantern only showed the distance ahead for about ten feet. He was careful now to make no noise, for all he knew, the opening might be picketed. It was midnight, still the tunnel continued. It certainly seemed to him that he had come more than this distance.

Then suddenly a gust of wind struck him and he found himself crawling on sand; it had drifted in from the opening. He was there! He stopped and listened. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. He crawled cautiously out and stretched his cramped limbs.

Yes, he was in the sand pit of which he had been told. He was out, out at last. He felt like shouting, for the tortuous journey had been a severe one. He stifled the wish, and rested, listening carefully for any possible sound. All was quiet.

He must, of course, be well beyond the Rebel lines; he was in the open country. Now was his time to push rapidly on, and place as much distance as possible between him and his enemies before the sun arose. He was very thirsty, and he took a pull from his precious water-bag, then stole noiselessly forward. His lantern he had extinguished at the first warning that he was out of the tunnel, not, however, before he had consulted his little pocket compass and ascertained the direction he was to take.

He ascended the somewhat steep incline of the sand pit, and was in the act of striking off to his left, when suddenly his heart almost stopped beating.

Not three feet away from him was the figure of a man. In the darkness he had almost stumbled upon him. He could have reached forward and touched him. So utterly taken aback was the boy that he uttered a sharp cry of terror, then, dodging past the dim figure, took to his heels and ran for his life. He heard behind him another shout of surprise. Evidently the meeting was as much a surprise to the watching man as it was to him. "Diablo!" he heard the man cry, and then there was a flash of fire, a whizzing sound over his shoulder, and "ping, ping" sounded all behind him, as a dozen rifles sprang into flame. He heard the whirring and the thud of the bullets as they struck all about him, but it was dark as pitch, and there was nothing for his enemies to aim at.

He ran like a scared dog; his water-bag and food sack thumping behind him. His extinguished lantern he cast away in mad haste; it fell with a crash of broken glass, and on, on, he sped over rough, broken ground. Once he stumbled and fell prone, but he was up again in an instant and running for all he was worth. He heard the sound of pursuing steps behind him, and increased his pace. He had always been a fast sprinter, and now felt sure he could outdistance his enemies, if no accident happened.

Gradually, slowly he shook them off. The sounds of their feet grew fainter and fainter, until at last they died away altogether, and he was alone He had escaped; he was past the Loyalist lines. Then he flung himself panting and exhausted down upon the ground, with an ever-listening ear for any sound.

He rested for fifteen minutes or more and then started off on a due north course. In an hour's time the first gleam of light that heralded the coming of the sun began to show. It was a strange landscape which opened up before the lad under the sun's increasing rays. Flat, gaunt, and bare. No sign of cultivation, not a habitation of any kind. Brazil, with its immense area, is a country of much contrast, and the part where Frank found himself was uninviting in the extreme

He pushed rapidly on, covering considerable ground, and about an hour later refreshed himself with a hearty breakfast of cold ham and bread, washed down with water from his bag. He was rather alarmed to notice that one-third of his water supply had already gone, and resolved to economize in the future. It was most probable that he would come across some habitations from where he could obtain some supplies. He hoped for the best, and went on his way with a light heart, whistling as he went There was no danger of any surprise, for he could see for miles. On the other hand, there was no place where he could conceal himself should he want to.

That day he figured he covered about twenty-eight miles, but it was very difficult for him to estimate just how far he had traveled. He ate and drank from his supply as sparingly as possible. His knee gave him considerable trouble; it was painfully sore, but by the next morning it had improved, and for the rest of his journey it gave him no further anxiety. The farther he advanced the higher rose his spirits. He must be far from the danger zone, and fast getting among friendly people; the Rebels held all the country roundabout, with the exception of the city of De Conquesta, and to that, he intended to give a wide berth.

Toward evening of the fourth day out, when water and food were both running low, he noticed for the first time the signs of men. A herd of cattle, grazing peacefully on the short, stubby grass, lifted their heads high in the air, scenting danger, then turned slowly about and trotted off westward, casting back many an anxious look at the lad. He resolved to follow them, rightly concluding that they would eventually lead him to the haunts of men. The short Brazilian twilight fast changed to night; still the herd trotted on and still the lad followed. He was about to give up and return to his course, fearing he was being led too far from his path, when in the distance he discerned a light.

With some caution he advanced toward it, and a short distance away met two men terurning from their evening milking. Big wooden yokes across their shoulders, and from the chain on either side suspended large pails, filled with foamy milk. The hungry and footsore boy gazed with envy at the tempting sight, then advanced boldly toward the men.

". stroy sed!"

He had learned how to say that before he started, for the skipper of the Crow had

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rightly surmised it might prove useful to him.

The men rattled off a volley of words and exclamations at him. He shook his head.

"Hablo poco Castellano."

They nodded and pointed toward the light. "Si, si," he said, and walked along by their sides. Many dogs rushed out as they neared the house, scenting a stranger. The men quieted them and pointed again to the house, evidently inviting Frank to come in with them.

Several big candles lighted up the one large room, and two women were busy inside preparing supper. The men spoke rapidly to them and they turned around. Frank was astonished to see they were nearly black. They were evidently negroes. The population of this vast South American Republic is largely composed of this half-caste race, a mixture of Spanish, Indian, and negro blood.

The women pointed to a three-legged stool, inviting the lad to be seated.

They nodded and grinned, showing their large, white teeth, then nodded again, and pointed in the direction from where he had come, endeavoring to ask him how far he had come and from where.

All the lad could do was to nod back and laugh; he could not tell her, if he had wished to. Presently supper, hot and steaming, was put on the plain wooden table, which was innocent of linen of any kind. Then the men were called in and all sat down together. By many signs and gestures they tried to discover from where the boy had traveled; all he could do, all he wished to do, in fact, was to wave his hand vaguely southward and then to show one of his silver dollars to prove he was able to pay for his meal. All took the big silver coin and examined it curiously. They had probably never seen its like before. They struck it on the table, then rolled it about from one to the other like children at play. Then one of the men held it in his hand, pointing to the food upon the table with the other hand, then toward Frank. Evidently he wished to convey the idea that he would take it for pay for the meal. He nodded, grinned again, and put it in his pocket. It seemed to Frank that there should be some change coming to him, but he was unable to give voice to his opinion, so nodded back and said in English: "All right, keep it, then, you old robber," knowing he was quite safe in thus expressing himself in English. Then the other man came over, and holding out his hand, demanded:

"Mucho."

"Mucho!" echoed Frank, "mucho what

"Mucho——" and the man pointed to the silver dollar which his companion was now examining again.

"No," said the boy, shaking his head violently, "it is enough."

The man, of course, did not understand the words, but there was no mistaking the gesture. He was insistent, however, and kept holding out his hand with a muttered: "Mucho, mucho," so finally the boy flung down another silver dollar upon the table, which the fellow grabbed greedily. Scarcely had the ring of the coin ceased, when he was besieged by the two women, one on either side, each demanding: "Mucho, mucho," with much insistence. This was getting too much of a joke, so the boy backed away, at the same time drawing his revolver and handling it carelessly. "No, no," he shouted with much vehemence shaking his head, "No mucho!" Apparently this satisfied them, for they returned to their seats and went to quarreling with the men for the division of the two dollars.

Frank thought this a good time to slip away, for he had no desire to remain under the roof of such people for the night, so with a curt "Buenas noches," [illegible] of the room and walked quickly [illegible] keeping a sharp lookout in the [illegible] treachery.

They did not meditate any, but he could hear them quarreling over the division of the money for quite a time after he left the house.

"If that is a specimen of the people around here I had better keep away from them," he thought, as he struck out into the wilds again, and prepared to find a place to sleep for the night. He had taken the opportunity to refill his water-bag, and also to stuff in considerable of the [illegible] meat of which their supper had consisted, but he had learned nothing of his whereabouts, or how far he was from Gavlao, the fellows apparently not understanding his questions.

It was a weary and footsore boy that crept into the little province town of Gavlao six days later, but safe between the soles of his well-worn shoes lay the precious dispatch and draft.

"Agua!" he cried piteously, as he staggered along its narrow, steep streets, and then with the next breath: "Il General de Gammapus!"

It was not long before both wants were satisfied, and he found himself in the presence of a short, fat, little man, who blinked at him through an immense pair of spectacles. This was the General de Gammapus. To hand over his dispatches, and to receive in return a draft on a local bank for the five thousand milries, together with the General's congratulations, was the work of only a short time, and then the boy found himself a stranger in a strange town, with twenty-five hundred dollars in gold and notes in his pocket.

CHAPTER XII.

It was nine o'clock at night on a certain Saturday evening some three months after the events related in the last chapter, and old Colonel Doulton sat at his desk in the study of his mansion behind "The Capstan" in Devonshire, England. The large family Bible lay open at the fly-leaf before him. A pen was between his fingers. Just behind him, leaning over the back of his chair stood Mrs. Doulton. Both their faces were serious and sorrowful.

"I may as well do it, I suppose," muttered the Colonel, as he leaned forward and commenced to draw a black line through the name, "Frank Edward Stanley Doulton."

Mrs. Doulton turned away her head, not caring to witness the blotting out of her only boy.

Still the father hesitated. "There's no earthly chance of his being alive; it's fifteen months, and if he had by any chance been saved we should have known it before now. The boy's dead, Helen, and we may as well realize it."

The mother stifled down a sob. It seemed to her they were destroying the last hope. Once more the father commenced to draw that fatal black line through the name, and once more he stopped. "There is no chance," he muttered once again, and then slowly began the erasure.

Suddenly there was an interruption, a knock sounded at the door and a servant entered.

"A young man in the hall wishes to see you, sir," he said.

"A young man—what's his name—any card?"

"He had no card and said you would know him if you came down, sir."

"I'm busy; I can't come down now; send him up."

The servant disappeared, and in a few moments footsteps were heard approaching. There was another knock at the door.

"Come in," called the Colonel. He hastily finished the fatal erasure, then looked up.

A tall, young fellow, bronzed and stalwart-looking, had entered. There was a smothered cry of joy from the mother, the father sprang to his feet, overturning his chair as he did so, then, with a shout of welcome, he dashed across the room.

"My boy! My boy!" he cried wildly.

Next moment the mother was at her son's side, half crying, half laughing, and then Frank Doulton was in the arms of his parents.

What a time they had that evening! From near and far the neighbors flocked in to welcome the boy who had returned from the dead, and when finally the last of them had departed, the old Colonel led his son over to the desk, where yet stood open the great family Bible.

He pointed to where the long, black line ran through the name: "Frank Edward Stanley Doulton." Then, "Born July 14, 1889. Supposed to have been lost at sea May 21, 1905."

There, you see, I've done it!" he said.

"But you must take it out, father," cried the mother, with tears of joy in her eyes. "You can take it out now, can't he, Frank?"

"Yes," echoed the Colonel, "I can take it out now, but," he added with a grim smile, "don't you go and make me do it again.

"[illegible] bet I won't," cried Frank, "once [illegible] enough for me."

The end.

The Withered Hand.

(Continued from page seven.)

to start from his head and he fell back ghastly of face and all unnerved.

"The dead alive!" he cried. "No, it's Mr. Timpson's ghost! I saw the burial certificate. I drew up your last will and testament. I can't have dead men for my clients —I—I——"

"Never mind, Mr. Polly," said Tinus, "I've just dropped in to say that, dead or alive the will stands."

"Wh—what" gasped Polly. "You're dead, man!"

Just as you please," with a little laugh that sounded terribly sepulchral to the breathless barrister. "If I'm really dead the will stands, of course. If I'm alive I don't want the Black Larches any longer."

Three months after this ghostly visitation Habberton was invited into the library where the most eventful incidents of his life had taken place.

He found his uncle seated in the chair at the table.

"I've decided to take a continental tour," said the old man. "I think a man who has been dead, yet lives, is strong enough to stand most any journey. I've just visited Mr. Polly who has at last become convinced that I am still in the flesh. I have had him draw up a new will. In it you will find a few changes. I have given you The Larches, minus all Kalmah's mystic machinery, which you have removed——"

"Sir——"

"Don't protest, my boy," interjected the old man. "I have left you something else—something better, no doubt, in your estimation, than this old house. I have willed you the person and the love of Thaddora."

Habberton could not find his tongue for a moment.

"I haven't been blind during the three months of my resurrection. You will accept The Larches?"

"Yes——"

"The rest you already have, eh?"

"Thaddora and I have linked our loves for life. Shall I fetch her?"

Old Timpson bowed his head with a smile and Jack vanished joyfully from the room.

The end.

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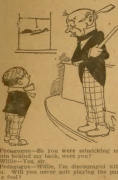


Pedagogue—So you were mimicking me again behind my back, were you?

Willie—Yes, sir.

Pedagogue—Willie, I'm discouraged with you. Will you never quit playing the part of a fool?

*

THE BURNING QUESTION.

"I love you very much, indeed,"
The eager young man said;
"Yes, more than all else in the world,"
And then his face grew red.

"Would I could call you all my own,"
He trembled as he spoke;
"You are the queen of all the queens,
But, darling, do you smoke?"

"I could forgive a scathing tongue,
Or disposition sour;
I could o'erlook a thousand faults
That might crop out each hour.

"I could withstand your woman's rage,
Could listen to your joke,
But what is troubling me each day
Is, whether, dear, you smoke?

"Extravagant though you might be
In hats three feet across;
Though hobble skirts should tie you down
I'd count that little loss.

"But ere I take the final step,
The clinching word is spoke,
I wish you'd tell me, queenly one,
If—if you—ever—smoke?"

*

On Account of Darkness.

Two baseball teams, which were made up of negro players, exhibited a great contest of the national game before a large crowd on the open lots at Twelfth and Porter streets.

The score stood two to two in the eighth inning. Two men were on the bases, two players were out, when the pitcher of one of the nines walloped the ball to mid-center. He sprinted around the bags as if in pursuit of a dozen chickens.

The center fielder of the opposing team shot the ball with terrific speed toward the fourth station, and as the runner was about to cross the plate the catcher touched him with the horsehide. The negro umpire shouted at the top of his voice:

"De runner am safe," and as the word "safe" died away the many spectators began to crowd around the umpire.

"What's dat?" shouted one. "You done be blin'," yelled another, and a few other remarks followed. The man argued for a while, and when the entire mob was crowded around him the umpire's voice rang out in loud tones:

"Game called on account of darkness!"

*

Beach Pirate.

It was the old farmer's first trip to the seashore.

"How much a day?" ventured the bucolic toiler as he entered the gold-embellished corridor of the beach hotel.

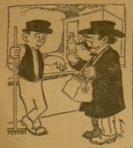
"Ten dollars," responded the suave clerk without blinking an eye.

"Ten dollars? Great Josephus! You must be one of those $10 hogs we hear so much about out in Kansas."

And then the old man went down on the sand for his first dip.

*

Lawn Novelties.



Faker—This hair restorer is so powerful that one drop of it will grow hair wherever it is placed.

Raker—Say, old man, what will you take for a barrel of it? I want to use it on our lawn; the grass seed didn't take this year.

A Bird Cage.

The prisoner was before the bar of justice for having been before some other bar too long.

"What were you doing drunk on the street?" asked the judge.

"Was I drunk, judge?" was the reply in a tone of surprised innocence.

"The arresting officer says you were."

"Under oath?"

"Certainly."

"Perhaps he's right, judge, but I was just going along with a bird cage in my hand."

The judge had a jug set before the prisoner.

"Do you call that a bird cage?" he inquired. "That's what you were carrying along in your hand."

The prisoner picked it up carefully, removed the stopper, took a smell, and turned it upside down. It was as dry as he was.

"Well, judge," he answered, slowly, "it ain't a bird cage now, since them officers has had a whack at it."

"Probably you are sober now and see things differently."

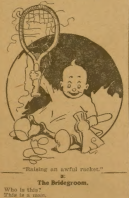
"That ain't it, judge. It was a bird cage when I had it last."

"Probably you can explain what you mean by a bird cage," suggested the puzzled court.

"Easy enough, judge," smiled the prisoner. "It had 40 or 50 swallows in it when they got it," and the lucidity of the explanation and the possibilities of what had happened to it affected the judge so powerfully that he dismissed the case.

*

Familiar Expression.



"Raising an awful racket."

*

The Bridegroom.

Who is this?
This is a man.
Where is he?
He is in church.
Why is he in church?
This is the day he weds. That is why he is in the church.
Who else is there?
The bride is there.
Does the bride blush and is she shy?
Oh, no. The bride does not blush and she is not shy. She is calm and cool. Trust her for that.
Does no one blush, then, and is no one shy?
"Oh, dear, yes. Look at the bridegroom. He is all that. His knees shake as well. If some one does not watch him he will lose the ring. His tie is out of place and when he tries to speak the words will not come. He feels faint, too, but no one looks at him.
Why does no one look at him?
He is the bridegroom. That is why. All eyes are on the bride. The bridegroom—Pooh! No one looks at him or cares about his woes.
Oh, has he woes, then?
Not yet, but soon.

*

Tale of Tolerance.

The late Justice Brewer was noted for his tolerant and broad-minded views. A Washington diplomat recalled a story told by Justice Brewer in illustration of the need of tolerance.

"We should respect the views of others"—so the story ran—"for morality itself is only a matter of environment.

"A missionary in the South Seas was distressed because his dusky parishioners were nude. He decided to try delicately to get them to wear at least a little clothing, and to this end he left a great many pieces of scarlet and green and yellow calico lying about his hut.

"An elderly dame called one afternoon for spiritual advice. The missionary noted how enviously her eyes rested on the calico, and he took up a two-yard piece of the yellow, saying:

"'I'll give you this if you'll wear it.'

"The female draped the calico about her like a skirt and departed in great glee.

"But the next day, nude, as before, she returned with the fabric under her arm. Handing it sadly to the missionary, she said:

"'Me no can wear it, missy. Me too shy.'"

*

Polly Was Disgusted.

According to Jimmy Reilly, who is the owner of a moving van, he has a regular job with one family. The woman of the house is simply mad on the subject of moving. She always shifts quarters four times a year, while the man is mad at the subject, and, if permitted, would stay in the same place until he took root.

A third and important member of the family is the parrot. "A fine burrd," said Mr. Reilly. "An intelligent burrd. Last spring I moved 'em to Orange, and the burrd sits by me on the driver's seat, peekin' troo the bars of his cage, and now and then makin' a witty remark to me. And last fall I moved 'em back to Long Island and they tried Swampscott. And all the way the burrd sits in his cage by me side, makin' an intelligent remark now and then, and cockin' his eye at me. So last winter I moved 'em back into town, and I puts me coat over the cage so the burrd wouldn't get cold, and he sits by me side troo the drive. And last week I was called on to move 'em up into Westchester County.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Reilly, "you'd hardly believe it—but after I got me wagon loaded I goes in, as usual, to get the parrot's cage and lift him up to the driver's seat. And the parrot looks at me sad and subdued, wid never one of them funny cracks he used to make when he sees me, for we got to be good friends. 'Hello, Polly,' says I to him. 'Reilly,' says he, 'me good man—where the hell are we goin' now?'"

*

Why He Observed.

It was in the last car of the through Pullman train.

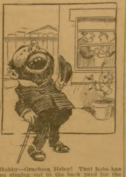
"Mamma," said little Archibald, "that man has on a wig."

"Sh!" cautioned his mother in a whisper. "Didn't I tell you not to be so observing?"

"Why not, mamma? Isn't this an observation car?"

*

The Cause of It.



Hubby—Gracious, Helen! That hobo has been singing out in the back yard for the last hour.

Wifey—Yes, William. It is all my fault.

Hubby—Your fault?

Wifey—Indeed it is. I thought I was [illegible] a dish of boiled oatmeal, and instead of that I boiled up the birdseed by mistake.

*

The Rush of Opulence.

"What's making all that noise?" asked the summer guest. "Surely you are not running a thrashing machine at this time of year."

"No," answered Farmer Corntossel, "the boys are figuring up the farm's profits on our new rapid-calculating machine."

*

Great Feat.

"Come on, pa," insisted little Ostend at the summer park, "and see the man 'hump the humps.'"

"You mean 'bump the bumps,' don't you, son?" inquired his father.

"No, 'hump the humps.' A man is going to jump over six camels."

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The Coptive Bandit.

(Continued from page four.)

"Yes."

"Swear to it by your ancestors!"

"I swear!" said Hop Soy readily and earnestly.

"As far as I am concerned, you shall be trusted. Settle it with your mistress. But, my man, if you betray us to Damon—you know what I have threatened!"

The Celestial added another vow and Rackley rode on well satisfied. Numerous problems loomed before him, but Damon was still muzzled. The game at the ranch was not yet lost.

It was a tremendous surprise to Burdilla, who had expected to hear that he, her champion, was a prisoner, when he rode composedly to the house with Hop Soy trailing meekly after. There was much to talk about, but matters were gradually put into shape, including the case of the cook. Duly discoursed, he was finally sent back to his pots and pans, outwardly a subdued and mastered man. It was hoped he would be faithful.

It was not until these details had been settled that a new problem was thrust upon Rackley. A cowboy appeared with a letter. It had never been posted, and was a very crude affair, evidently the makeshift of somebody not given to letter-writing. The road-agent opened the envelope and found a brief note. It was as follows:

"Mr. Clarke. Sir—We want to see you at the cabin in the gulch.

"DANNY'S UNCLE."

Hart Groom was heard from again. Impatient of delay, he had summoned the master of the ranch to keep his promise.

Of all the features of his novel situation, the complication pleased Rackley least. Hart Groom was not a noble figure. Ignorant and shiftless, he represented a grade of mankind below the heroic cast, but the counterfeit owner of the ranch remembered the sincerity in his manner, and suspected that the claim that young Danny was son of the real Wayland Clarke was founded on more than fraud.

When the afternoon was half-spent he left the house, took his way to the hills, and so sought the cabin in the gulch. He had often seen it casually in the past; now he was going with an errand to perform that ill suited him. He could do no more than keep up the policy of delay, and it annoyed him.

It happened that Hart was at the door. He received the caller gravely and asked him in. They entered, and Rackley saw the boy and his mother. For the first time he saw Delia Groom at hand. She was still young, rather well formed and not without grace. More, she possessed intelligence well above her brother's, and a certain comeliness of face.

Rackley stood in the presence of the woman who claimed to be his wife, but she neither advanced upon him nor claimed greeting different from that due a stranger.

Her eyes were not so idle. She gave him a swift glance and then shot a more eloquent regard to her brother. Rackley read between the lines. At the first meeting with Hart that man had plainly been puzzled and uncertain. Knowing little of his real brother-in-law, he had, nevertheless, failed to see anything familiar in his face. Now, Delia's look talked, but more was to be guessed. The road-agent suspected that they had managed to see him, sometime of late, when he was unconscious of being watched.

The calm reception, the lack of emotion and the manifest embarrassment of Hart Groom told a plain story. Brother and sister knew he was not Wayland Clarke. Why, then, had he been summoned? Rackley found the answer in one word: Blackmail!

Outwardly at his ease, he took the burden of the opening from the shoulders of the nervous miner.

"I have your letter, so I came."

"I thought," said Hart, his eyes shifting from point to point and always avoiding the caller, "that you should see Delia."

"I've come as you asked."

"Delia and Danny are well," pursued Groom, still wandering.

"I have been busy at the ranch. Daniel Clarke is poorly. His condition grows worse and he can't last long."

"Sometimes sick folks last longer than anybody thinks. It may be so with him. We have been talking about your not wanting to worry him with your affairs while he lives, so we won't press it upon you to take Delia and Danny there, just now. But we think—we think you should do something for your son here."

"What should I do?"

"You are rollin' in wealth. The ranch is better than a gold mine, and there is no lack there. Look at us! Delia and Danny are with barely enough to eat, and see this shack they live in! 'Tain't right!"

"What do you suggest?"

"They need money powerful bad, an' there's nobody but you to give it!"

Rackley found his suspicions confirmed. He had been called there to meet blackmail.

CHAPTER XIII.

GETS INFORMATION.

Rackley met the situation composedly. He had no bitterness for Hart Groom or his sister. Insufficiently endowed with viciousness for the part they were acting, they were plainly ashamed. Hart was nervous and ill at ease, while Delia's face was miserably sad. Their home was one of extreme poverty. Hart had barely kept the family supplied with food enough to ward off starvation, and their household goods could almost be carried in one's arms. Desperate in their poverty, they had resorted to blackmail, but without spirit and, as he looked at it, without actual vice.

He had brought money with him that had been his in the hills, and thinking it would be essential to his hope of buying their silence. Now he was ready to give this money, not so much as blackmail as because of the pity he felt for them.

He used no undue haste in producing it. For ten minutes he talked with Hart, and also compelled Delia to say a few words, but it was he who finally returned to the main subject. He produced the money.

"Here," he said, "is fifty dollars. It is all I have now, but it will be of some use. Take it, and may it be of help to you. Believe me, friends, I have great good will for you, and if I can see you righted I will do it. I trust that you will soon have money in abundance. Danny, lad, come here!"

On a former occasion the boy had shrunk from Rackley. Now, he shrank again, though with less timidity. The road-agent talked on, kindly and persuasively, and presently the timidity was vanquished. Danny came and was taken upon Rackley's knee, and then he was talked to kindly and freely. Last of all, the caller presented him with a pocketknife, and the conquest of Danny was complete. While he talked to the lad the road-agent stole occasional glances at his elders. Hart was dully pleased, while the joy and pride of a mother, sometimes pictured in Delia's face, was as often succeeded by sadness. It was to be suspected that she was more than ever ashamed of having exacted blackmail.

Rackley was seeking to win the good will of this humble family, to guard against betrayal at their hands. When he had stayed as long as he thought prudent, he prepared to go. After a farewell to the boy he shook hands with both Delia and Hart, making the parting kindly but brief. Then he went his way, and the gulch was soon left behind him.

He went knowing that the Grooms no longer thought him Wayland Clarke. Delia he could not deceive. He wondered as to the truth of their past. Nothing had been said about the marriage certificate Hart had mentioned on the former occasion, and Rackley did not believe they could produce it, yet he carried the conviction that Delia had been the real Wayland's wife.

Anon, as he advanced toward the valley, he dwelt upon his chances as the Groom family entered into them, and without much of apprehension.

"They know," he summed up, "that I am not Wayland, but I have their good will. I fancy it will not be they who will betray me. I wonder who it will be?"

Rackley did not suspect the fact, but, on the farther side of a low ridge along which he was passing, another man was at that moment going in the opposite direction. The man was Mathew, the tramp. Mathew had that day taken a notion to go to the hills, and he had a reason. After passing the little divide he reached a spot which seemed to please him, and there he paused. Sitting down he drew a quart bottle from under his ragged coat. It was filled to the neck with liquid of some sort, and he held it up so the light could fall properly upon it and looked long and hard, growing unusually amiable as he did so.

"Hallo, old Rip Van Winkle!" he muttered jovially. "Taking a long sleep, are you? Wake up—be in good spirits! Old friend, it warms the pools and caverns of my heart to see you. Shake hands! Here's how!"

He drew the cork, sniffed at the contents, and then his face grew dark.

"In moderation!" was the growling comment. "That's what he said—he! Poison

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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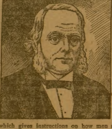

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(Continued from page fourteen.)

the carrion crow! In moderation! Who's he, to say how I shall drink? Yes, that's it—who is he, anyhow?"

Mathew was in ugly mood, but presently he raised the bottle slowly to his lips and took a drink. It pleased him, and he repeated. Mathew was with his best friend and his worst foe. All through the remaining hours of the day he wooed the combination. By that time he had lost his identity. His head was swimming, and he was like an atom floating in the air. What happened next he did not know. He was dimly conscious of getting upon his feet and walking aimlessly; of falling, now and then, and of bumping into rocks. Then came oblivion.

When he awoke it was day. He was by a stream of running water, and its musical gurgle reminded him that he was thirsty, but he was weak and ill, and failed to muster resolution to drag himself to the stream. He closed his eyes. Ten minutes later he opened them and saw a small boy playing by the water, dipping with an old tin cup.

"Boy," he said feebly, "bring me a drink!"

The lad gave a start, for he had not before seen this ragged man who lay prone and was so wretched a figure. Wide-eyed, he stood irresolute, ready to flee, but looking his hardest. Mathew felt that he must not lose the drink and he curbed his desire to act the brute.

"Just a sip of water!" he said coaxingly. "Bring it to a poor sick man. That's a little man!"

More words were needed, but he prevailed. The boy came, and the man drank. Gratitude bubbled up within him.

"That's a brave boy! Always be kind to poor sick men. Hold out a helping hand to the needy—and," Mathew added, to himself, "give them a kick, hang them! You are a fine lad. I wish I had a son like you!"

"My mother couldn't spare me," faltered the lad, drawing back.

"Of course not. I won't take you away from her. You do well to like her. Always stand by her. I have a father, myself; a good, noble, kind-hearted father, and I give him a world of love. We are everything to each other. You don't know just how much I love him!"

Mathew was in a mood not common to him, but, really, he liked the looks of the manly little fellow, and it pleased him to ramble on, half foolishly and half sarcastically, secretly thinking himself very crafty to so deceive his youthful companion. In all this the main reason was that, knowing he would want more water, he wished to keep a carrier hard by. Finally he found subjects for conversation becoming few.

"What's your name?" he asked carelessly.

"Danny Groom!"

Mathew's swollen eyes opened wide for the first time, and he stared hard at the boy.

"Danny—who?" he asked, plainly interested.

"Danny Groom."

"Where do you live?"

"Up in Black Gulch."

"Who with?"

"My mother and my Uncle Hart."

"Eh—your Uncle Hart? What's your mother's name?"

"Delia Groom."

"Ah-h-h!" aspirated Mathew, a new expression on his face. Then he muttered: "It can't be."

"What can't be?" asked Danny.

"Boy, how old are you?"

"Eight years, the twelfth of last January."

"Ah-h! Who's your father?"

Danny meditated. Of late he had heard some talk he did not fully understand, and he had intentionally been blinded as to its meaning. Now he studied the point and tried to arrive at a decision.

"I reckon I have no father," he finally replied.

"Oh!" said Mathew, and then he studied the face keenly. "You say," he soon went on, "your mother is Delia Groom. I mean, that you live in a gulch somewhere. Say, do you know of the big valley yonder, where the houses are, and the cattle and horses?"

"Why, yes; I've seen all these things from the hills. That house is grand. I wish I had one like it!" and boyish enthusiasm rose high.

"Maybe you will have, sometime. No, I don't think you will. Ever been down there?"

"No."

"Folks from there ever been to your home?"

"No, oh! no; they are rich!"

"Oh! are they? But, look ye, boy, does your mother never talk to you about them—about the Clarkes?"

"No. She won't talk about them. I ask her about them, sometimes, but she thinks of something else to say and won't speak of them."

"Does she—listen close to this question—does she ever talk about your father?"

"No."

"I thought not. By the way, where is this gulch house where you live?"

"Why, it's just around that corner of ridge, not a minute's walk away. Listen! Can't you hear my mother calling the chickens? Shall I tell her you want to see her?"

The last words were spoken with a change of voice, for Mathew had hurriedly gained his feet. Something like alarm was pictured in the pock-marked face.

"No, no!" exclaimed Mathew, casting a feverish glance toward the corner of the ridge. "I can't stop. I have business to attend to; I have an engagement—never mind! Good-by!"

He hurried off along the stream, and his course was away from the little ridge. Danny gazed after him until the wavering figure disappeared among the rocks.

"That's a queer man!" murmured the boy. "I wonder who he is?"

(Continued next week.)

Strange Pemberton Affair.

(Continued from page three.)

information, please do not hesitate to call upon me, sir. I have been with the judge all my life, and there is nothing, even up to sacrificing my life or my honor, that I would not do for him."

"I believe you, Obed. Your very appearance tells me that. Honesty and fidelity are stamped upon your features. You would sacrifice yourself if you thought you were doing the judge a service. Now send Jane, please."

Obed looked queerly at him while he spoke, as though he suspected there was a deeper meaning to the words than lay upon the surface, but concluding that this might be a case where silence was golden he wheeled and left the library.

(Continued next week.)

MADAME LA FOND'S FASHION NOTES.

For Autumn Motoring.

Motoring is always especially enjoyable in the early autumn, and there are already being shown attractive and varied hats for the incoming season. Turbans, close-fitting bonnets, pokes and hoods are to have equal vogue, for each is shown in some novel and interesting form. Velvet, silk and the long haired hatter's plush are favorite materials, and in many of the hats and bonnets two are combined.

Close-fitting turbans are becoming to a great many women, and among these motoring hats are offered turbans that are longer than wide, with brims of velvet and draped crowns of Persian and brocaded silks that are exceedingly attractive, while they could be worn upon the street as well as in the motor car. As a matter of course a veil accompanies each while riding, but this is easily removed, when the turban becomes suitable for general run-about wear. Modifications of the Napoleon model are to be seen, too, and are really very attractive, fitting the head closely and promising an attraction that is by no means too conspicuous for hats of general wear. A pretty one seen today is of blue hatter's plush with trimming of satin ribbon in matching color. It fits snugly over the head with the points just back of the ears, and is practical and becoming in one.

Bonnets and hoods, however, are preferred by many motorists and offer a great deal of variety. Real old-fashioned grandmother's bonnets made of shirred taffeta of the chameleon sort make fascinating frames for fresh, young faces. They are worn with the chiffon veil draped over the face and are as quaint and interesting as well could be. Hats and close-fitting bonnets are, however, considered more practical by a great many women, and the autumn shows several interesting novelties. Pointed hoods of velvet with trimming of handsome banding about the edges are shown, and are pretty, and some of the smartest of the close-fitting bonnets combine velvet crowns with fur edges. Brown is a conspicuous favorite among autumn colors, and a handsome bonnet of this sort shows the crown is made of soft draped velvet, while about the face is a finish of black coque feathers. The strings are of chiffon and are of generous width.

More to Follow.

"Doctor, are you sure you have told me the worst?"

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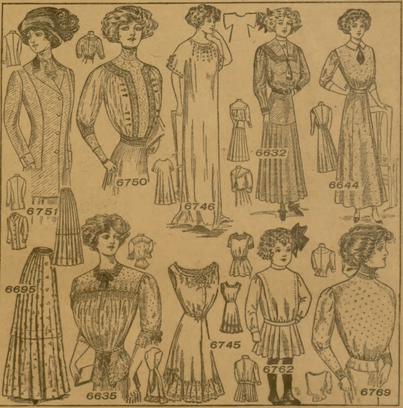

6750—Fancy Gathered Blouse, 34 to 40 Bust. The quantity of material required for the medium size is 2⅛ yards 24 or 27, or 1⅛ yards 44 inches wide, with 1⅜ yards of all-over lace and 2⅜ yards of banding.

6635—House Jacket with Yoke and Peplum, 32 to 40 Bust. The quantity of material required for the medium size is 2⅛ yards 24 or 27, 2⅛ yards 32, or 1⅛ 44 inches wide, with 5 yards of embroidery 6⅛ inches wide, 2⅛ yards of beading to make as illustrated; 3⅛ yards 24 or 27, 2⅜ yards 32, or 1⅞ yards 44 inches wide if material is used throughout.

6695—Straight Plaited Skirt, 22 to 30 waist. The quantity of material required for the medium size is is 8½ yards 24 or 27, 7 yards 32, or 5⅛ yards 44 inches wide. The width of skirt at the lower edge is 4½ yards or 3 yards when the plaits are pressed flat.

6745—Three-Piece Combination, 34 to 44 Bust. The quantity of material required for the medium size is 3½ yards 36, 2⅝ yards 44 inches wide, 3½ yards embroidery for the frill, 3 yards of beading.

6769—Plain Blouse or Guimpe for Misses and Small Women, 14, 16 and 18 years. For the 16-year size will be required 2⅝ yards of material 24 or 27, 1⅞ yards 36, or 1½ yards 44 inches wide, with 2 yards of banding.

6762—Child's Dress, 2, 4 and 6 years. For the 4-year size will be required 3⅛ yards of material 24 or 27, 2⅜ yards 36, or 1¾ yards 44 inches wide, with ⅜ of a yard 27 inches wide to trim as shown in the small view.

6746—One-Piece Night Gown. Small 34 or 36, Medium 38 or 40, Large 42 or 44 Bust. The quantity of material required for the medium size is 6 yards 27, 3½ yards 36 or 44 inches wide.

6751—Single Breasted Coat, 34 to 42 Bust. The quantity of material required for the medium size is 4⅝ yards 27, 2⅛ yards 44, or 2⅛ yards 52 inches wide, with ⅜ of a yard of velvet for the collar.

6632—Sailor Suit for Misses and Small Women, 14, 16 and 18 years. The quantity of material required for the medium size (16 years) is 11½ yards 24 or 27, 5⅛ yards 44 or 52 inches wide, with 2½ yards of wide, 4½ yards of narrow braid, ⅜ yard 27 inches wide for the shield.

6644—Costume for Misses and Small Women, 14, 16 and 18 years. The quantity of material required for the medium size (16 years) is 7⅛ yards 24 or 27, 5½ yards 32, or 4⅛ yards 44 inches wide, ½ yard 27 for collar and cuffs.

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For Youthful Eyes

THE LUCK OF THREE.

'Twas in the old-year days, when Halloween
A place among the festivals held still,
That Jack and Hal and I, with hearts yet green,
Went to a husking-bee at Middleville.
Each sprucer than a lord in store-made gear
Resolved to bring some splendid trophy back;
And Jack indeed secured the reddest ear—
Ah, lucky Jack!

And later, when the nuts were passed around,
The cider and the other homely cheer,
It was declared that whosoever found
The reddest apple in a barrel near
Might kiss that maiden thrice whom he loved best,
And crown her queen of all the festival.
Hal's pippin was adjudged the ruddiest—
Ah, luckier Hal!

But far from where the glinting lanterns hung,
When Jack and Hal had won their victories
And tired of them, a lover found a tongue
Lost temporarily, and 'neath the trees
Received from lips half-dumb with happy smiles
The right to kiss till breath should fail and fly
The reddest cheeks within a thousand miles—
Ah, luckiest I!

Saved by Two Pumpkins.

This is the season of the "Jack-o'-lantern," and a story told by the Chicago Advance, although it deals with an incident which took place nearly two hundred years ago, is therefore timely. It is the story of Prudence and Endurance Place, two girls who lived in the Cocheco Valley, New Hampshire.

At that time the country from Portsmouth to Ossippee was an unbroken wilderness and settlers were few. The Place family lived in a log house in a small clearing. Indians occasionally called at the house, and Mr. Place always treated them courteously, and never sent them away empty-handed.

When Prudence and Endurance, twin sisters, were fourteen years old, Mr. and Mrs. Place, with the younger children, went on a visit to Portsmouth, leaving the twins to keep house. During the first day of their home-keeping the girls gathered the big yellow pumpkins from the field and laid them in a pile near the back door.

While resting from their work they amused themselves by cutting two hideous Jack-o'-lanterns from large pumpkins, each seeking to outdo the other in making the most grotesque face. They stuck the two heads on poles, fixed candles inside, and made ready to astonish their father on his return by showing the grinning faces at the window.

While Endurance prepared the simple supper and set the house to rights for the night, Prudence went out to drive home the cow and the sheep. She had to go farther than she had expected, and as she passed a clump of trees was startled to see three Indians on the other side, talking earnestly, gesticulating, and pointing now and then toward the log house in the clearing.

The girl was alarmed. Turning back without allowing herself to be seen, she hurried homeward and told her sister what she had discovered.

"They have found out that father and mother are away, and they are coming here to steal, and perhaps to kill us," the two said to each other.

For a minute the frightened girls did not know what to do. The Jack-o'-lanterns were lying in a corner of the room, and like an inspiration it came to Endurance that with these horrible, grinning faces they might scare away the Indians.

Near the back door was a pit, used for storing potatoes, and now covered with boards and brush. Taking their Jack-o'-lanterns, the two girls scrambled into the hole, and concealed the entrance by drawing the boards and brush back into place.

After what seemed hours of waiting and listening, they heard stealthy steps about the house, which was in total darkness. Listening intently, they heard the Indians in the garden, evidently searching for them.

Now was the moment for action. The candles were lighted in the Jack-o'-lanterns, and the hideous heads thrust up through the brush. The Indians waited for only one glimpse. Filled with superstitious terror and believing that they had seen devils, they fled in such haste that Prudence and Endurance, when they ventured from their place of concealment in the morning, found a tomahawk and three eagle feathers in the garden path.

The spot was ever afterward regarded by the Indians with superstitious awe. Not one of them was ever known to approach the log house of the Places again.

Halloween, Old and New.

The first day of November is All Saints' Day, or All Hallows, as it was called in olden times. It was customary to observe the eve preceding All Hallows, and it was called, consequently, Hallow-even, and in time Halloween.

Perhaps it was because the saints were thought to be in the ascendancy on November 1 that the superstitious folk of ye olden days imagined that the mischievous fairies and all the other imps and gnomes held their highest revel of the year on the night before. Anyhow, all the witches that ever were heard of were looked for on Halloween, and from time immemorial the eve of All Hallows has been the particular night of all the year when "high jinks" of the weirdest and uncanniest sort prevailed.

Every year of late years all the popular publications of the day have devoted more or less space to telling over again the old Halloween rites, but no one of them gives so good an account of the Halloween mysteries as Robert Burns' poem "Halloween," which any and every one may read for himself. One who does not know old Scottish dialect must read an edition of Burns that has footnotes or a glossary, remember.

The ancient Halloween customs are dying out in part, even among the Scottish peasantry, where they were most firmly entrenched, but Halloween parties, in which some of the more modest of the old games are played, are given each year by young people all over America, England and Scotland.

The modern Halloween party is apt to be a dance and supper, with a few more or less modified games of other days thrown in.

TONIGHT IS HALLOWEEN.

We've gathered in some apples,
And some chestnuts, big and brown,
Because tonight there's going to be
A racket in the town!
You see tonight is Halloween,
And oh, the things we'll do!
We'll roast some chestnuts, pop some corn,
And bob for apples, too!

And then we'll dress ourselves in sheets,
And creep around the place,
And each will have a Jack-o'-lantern
With an awful face!
And if we stay out very late
Perhaps we'll see a sight,
For this is Halloween, and so,
Of course, it's Witches' Night!

Shovel for the Shore!

Some women that were staying on Long Island the past summer went out in a launch one day. There was one boy with them, and he was running the engine. The engine got out of order, and the boy broke his arm trying to crank it. Then the women began paddling toward shore with the one oar that was in the boat, but the woman that started the work dropped the paddle overboard. They all thought that they might have to stay in the launch all night until they found an old shovel in a corner. They used the shovel as a paddle and finally, after they had all blistered their hands, shoveled their way to harbor.

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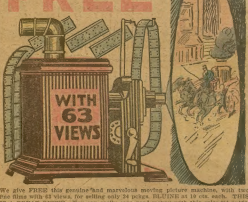

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